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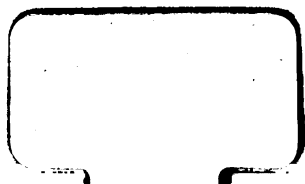
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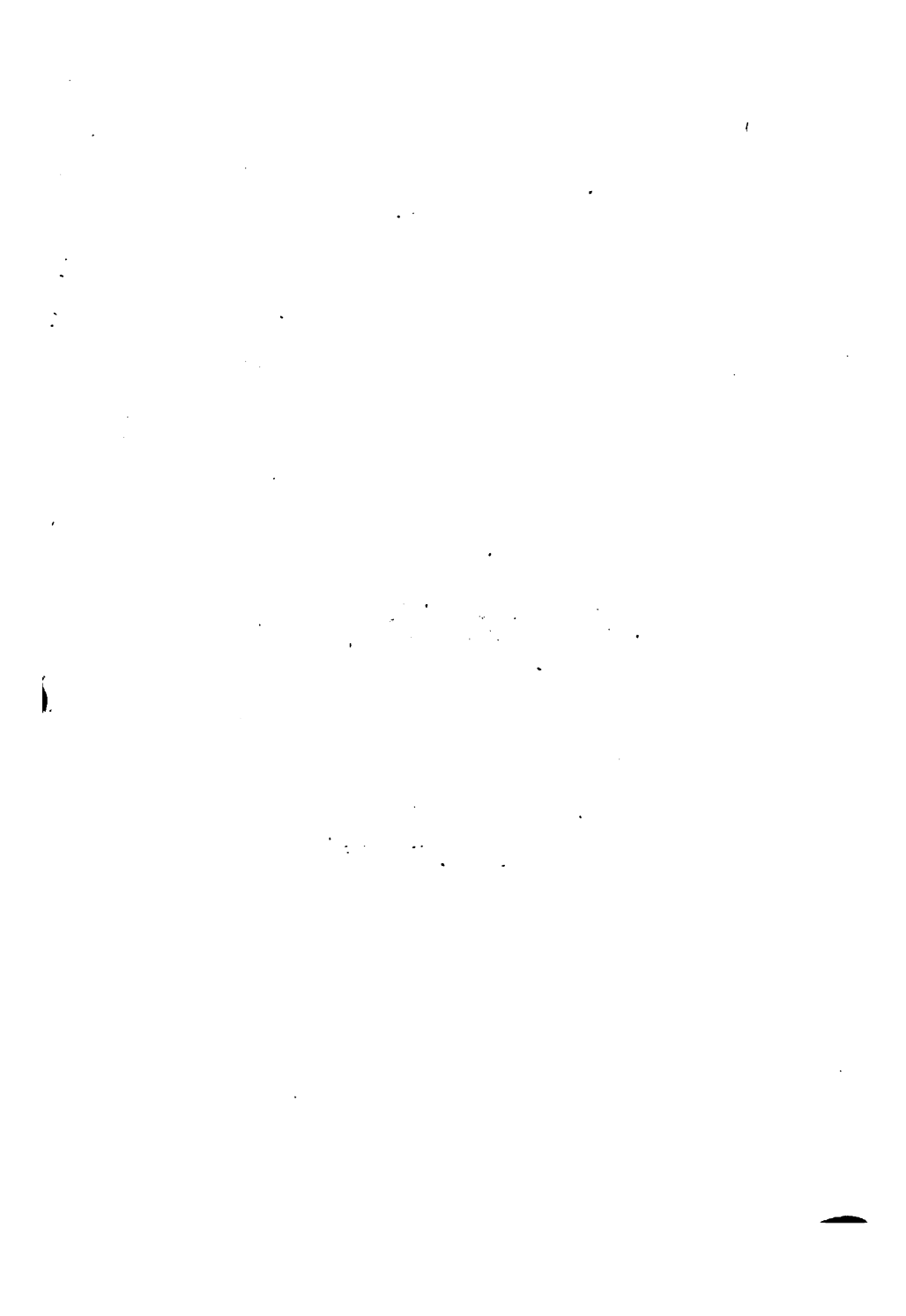
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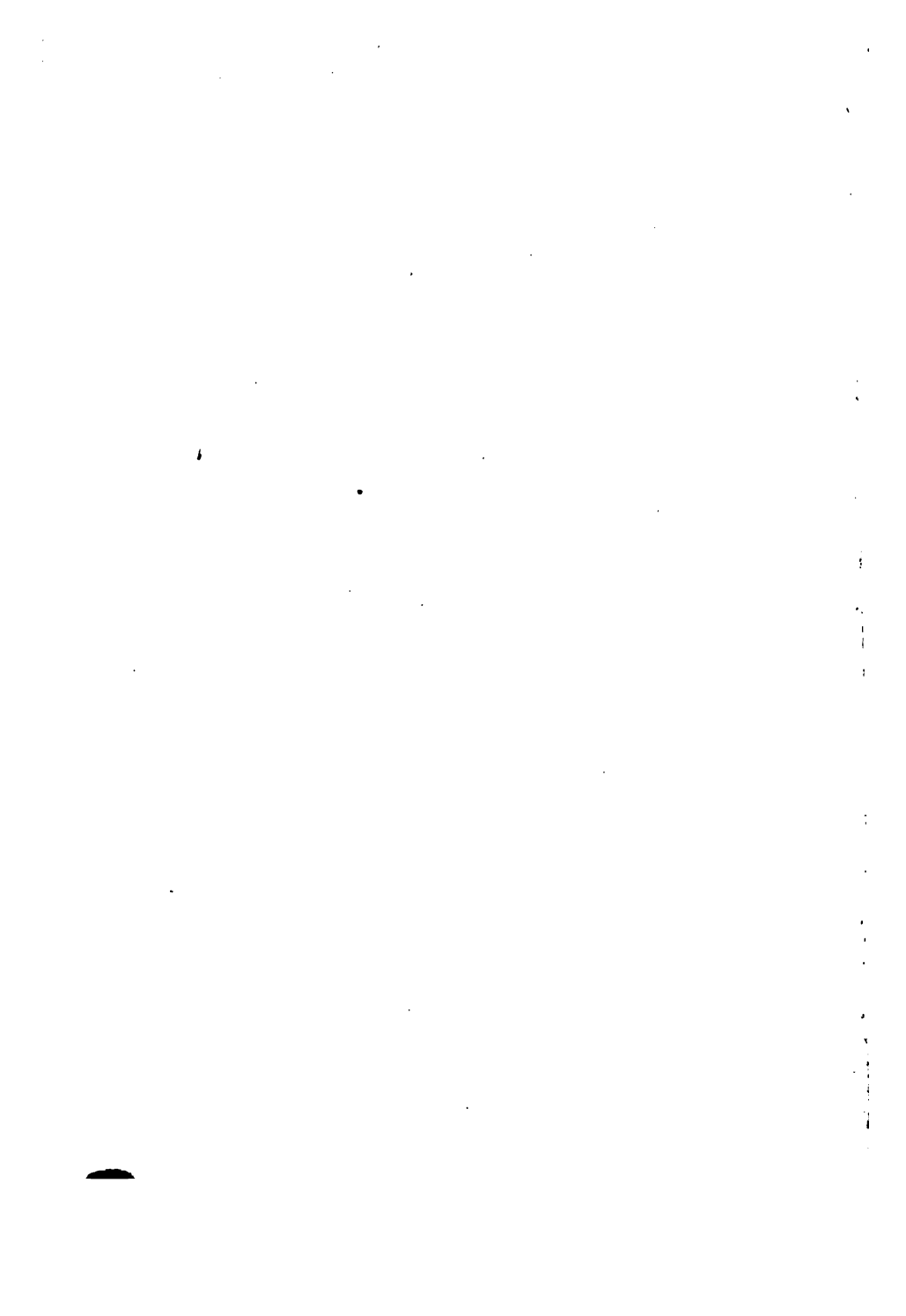
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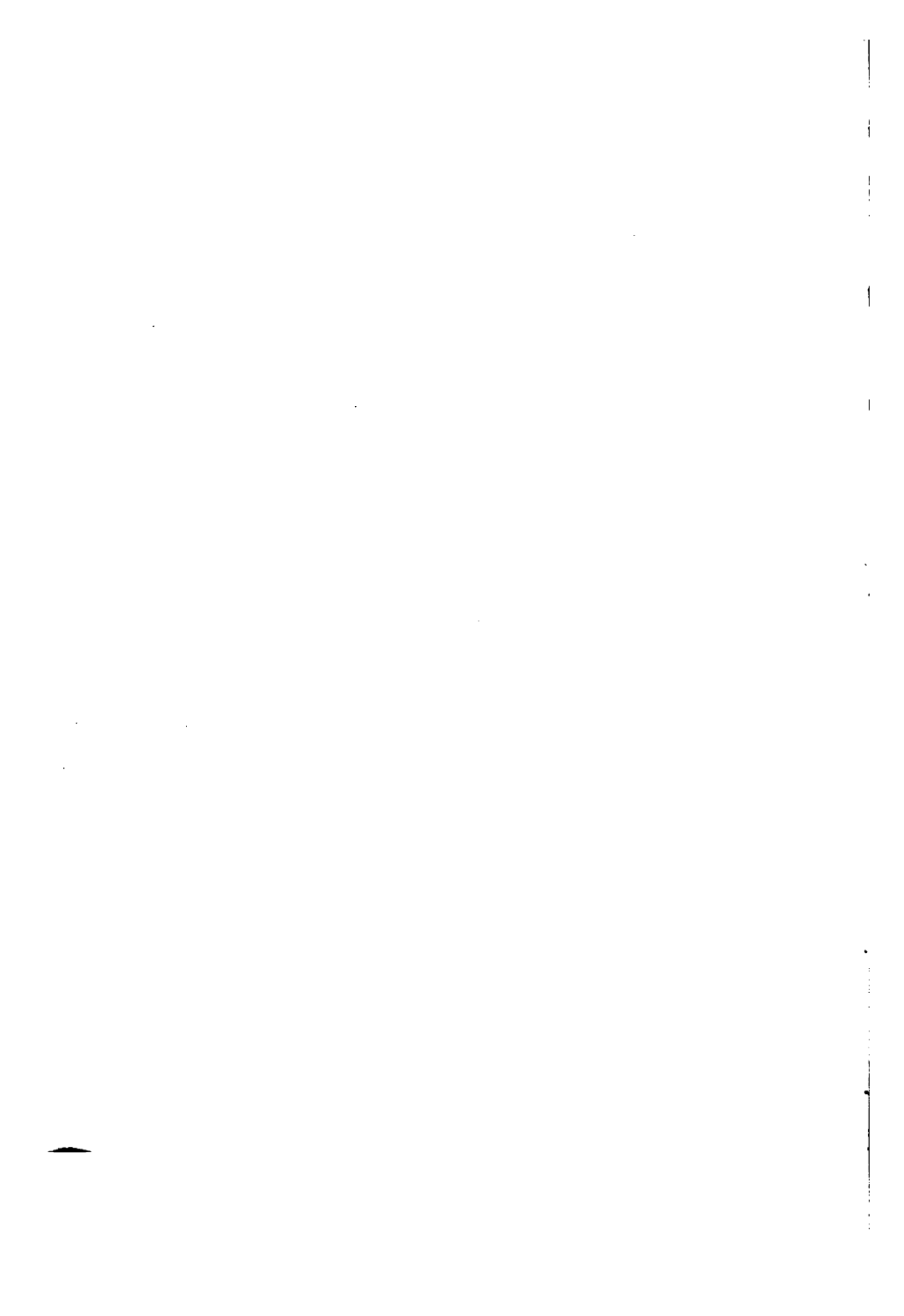
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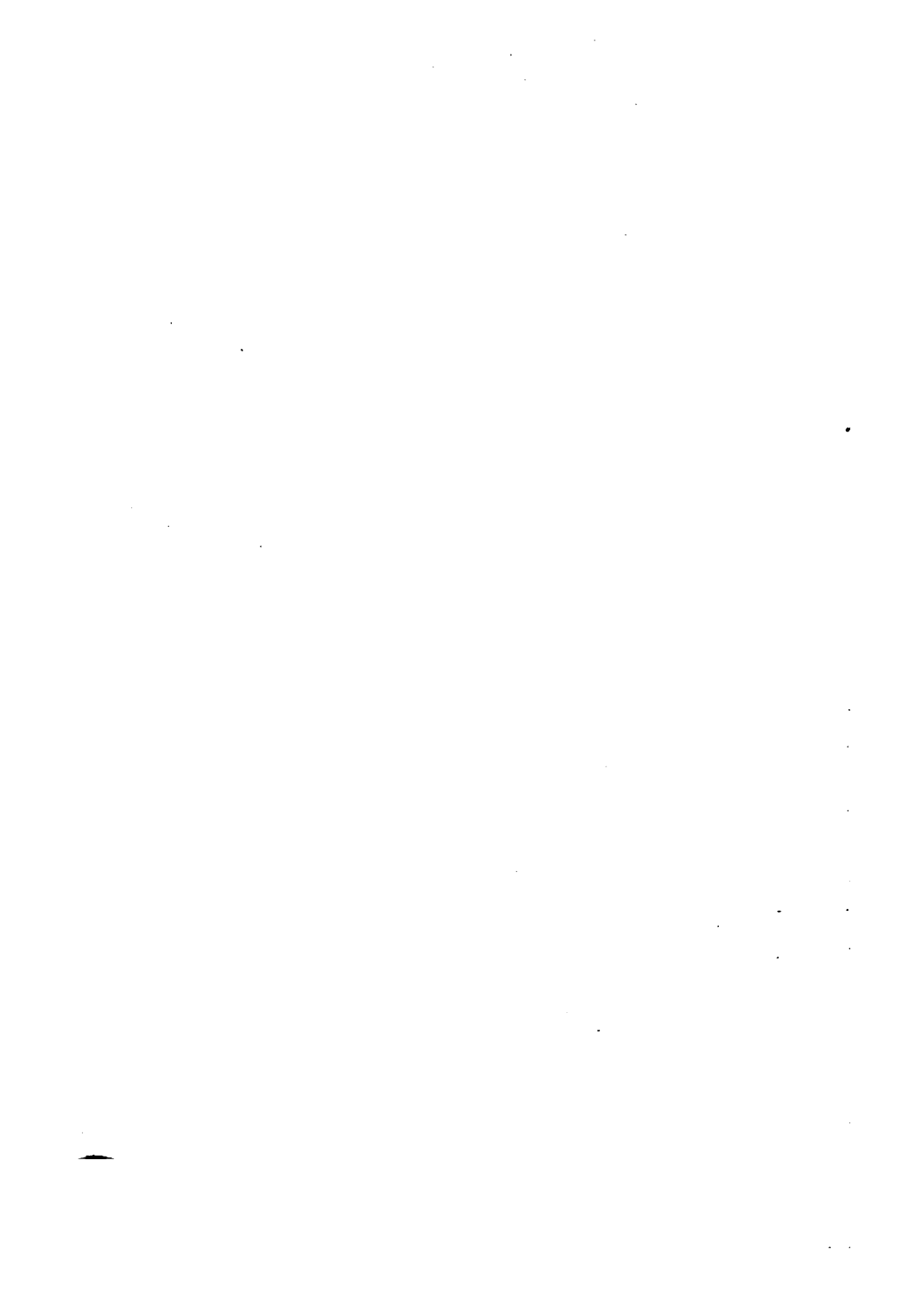
TO  
GEORGE WILLIAM SHELDON, Litt.D.  
IN MEMORY OF  
SOME VERY PLEASANT HOURS



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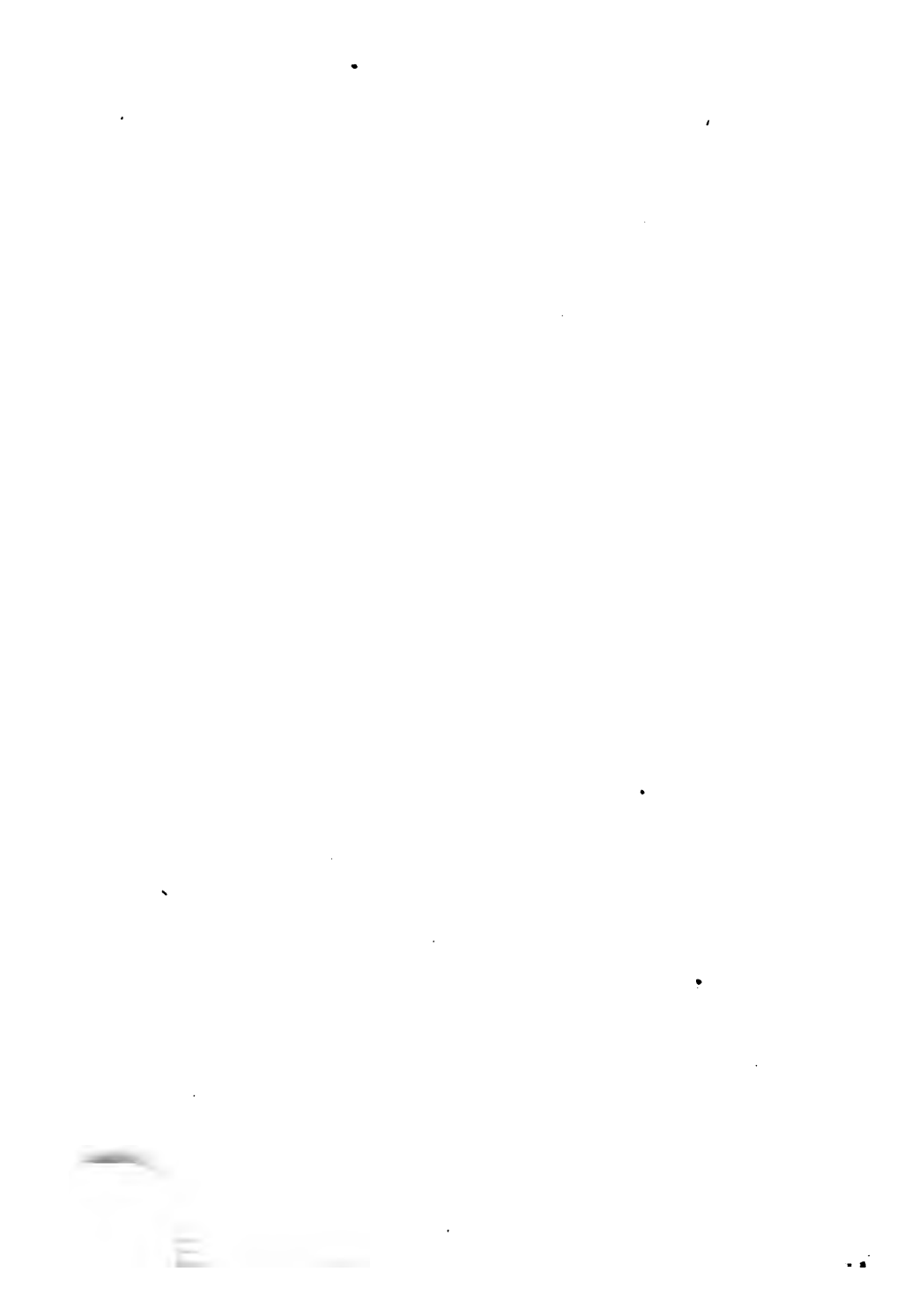
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**WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS**



## WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

MR. HOWELLS has essayed so many kinds of literary work, and has won so much deserved distinction in them all, as to make it very difficult to know from just what point of view one should regard him in considering his writings as a whole. It is, of course, primarily as a novelist that the popular mind will always think of him; yet when we come to analyze the meaning of his work, and seek to grasp the underlying motive of it all (it will be quite apparent to the analyst that fiction is but one particular expression of a spirit that pervades his other literary work as well), and that the novel is, at most, only one medium of several by which he has endeavored to effect a given purpose. A broad survey of all his writings will, I think, reveal that purpose in making clear the fact that it is really as a critic that we ought to view him, and in giving us the critic's motive as the fundamental basis for a final judgment of his place in literature.

It is not, however, merely as a literary critic that he most demands attention. One finds it quite impossible to narrow a consideration of his genius in such a way as this. Mr. Howells, to be sure, as well as others, is a critic of literature, and he is a very searching and suggestive critic, too; but one cannot even touch upon his literary criticism without feeling that in reality it is but a part, and a comparatively unimportant part, of his wider criticism of life; and that the same is true of every other phase of his intellectual activity when regarded separately and alone. This can, indeed, be said more broadly of Mr. Howells than of any other English-speaking author. Mr. Henry James, no doubt, is also in a way a critic of life; but his little corner of observation is so very little, his lenses are so carefully adjusted to one particular focus, and his instrument is so obviously an opera-glass and not a telescope, as to make his books the impressions of a first-nighter rather than the accurate and cosmic view of a sociological astronomer. Mr. Howells, on the other hand, has swept the whole horizon of his time; and it is not, therefore, merely as an essayist or as a novelist or as a poet that we must consider him, but as one who in his criticism and his fiction and his poetry alike

has set before himself the task of picturing the life of his own age and of analyzing its spirit and its tendencies.

It is, of course, in fiction that his work has been most fully carried out; and, therefore, chiefly from his fiction one obtains the truest insight into all his intellectual processes, and the best examples also of his critical felicities and his fundamental limitations. The circumstance that fiction is his chosen field of effort gives the subject a peculiar interest, because it involves a glance at the question of the American Novel—the question whether there has yet been written, or whether there is ever to be written, a kind of fiction that Americans shall recognize as essentially national, not only in its theme and color, but in its external form and literary technique.

Now, as to the American Novel when regarded from one point of view, one cannot help agreeing on the whole with Mr. Rollo Ogden's witty and, in the main, most sensible contentions. It is, indeed, absurd to suppose that, after all the centuries of creation and experiment which lie between Parthenius and Rudyard Kipling, we are going to witness the evolution of some new and striking literary manner, some principle of constructive art that

no one has hitherto perceived, some tremendous *epochemachend* discovery that shall do for fiction what steam and electricity have done for mechanics, and that shall subtly harmonize with the material bigness and boisterousness of our native land. This vaguely fascinating dream has not, however, been altogether valueless. It has given the young brood of magazine-writers a theme of perennial interest, over which they can moult their literary pinfeathers at twenty dollars a page, and it has provided the American public with a pleasant if evanescent sensation perhaps once in every six months; for at intervals of just about this length the joyous announcement has gone forth that now at last *the* American Novel has been written; and then the literary tom-toms have been violently beaten, and every one in the Literary Shop has whooped it up so long as people could be induced to listen to the row, and until they have gone back again to the reading of English novels that are not constructed on a scientific theory or from patriotic motives, but are simply good, strong specimens of writing that grip the reader's attention, and make him willing and even eager to part with his money for more of the same sort.

Therefore, in this sense of the word, one need not be looking for an American novel as distinct from an English or a French or a Scandinavian or an Italian or a Græco-Roman novel. It may be assumed that the resources of fiction-writing are just as thoroughly well known as they ever will be; that all the appliances of the art have been discovered and tested long ago; that no amount of taking thought will add a single item to the technical equipment which is at the service of every novelist to-day; and that whenever a really great novel is produced, it is great because of the man behind the book, and not because of any fine-spun theory which the book itself exemplifies. A heaven-born artist does not spend the best years of his life in hunting up new colors for his palette. It is only a servant-maid who makes a poor pen an excuse for her bad spelling. And so in fiction-writing, if the *vivida vis* inflame the writer, it doesn't make the slightest difference whether he is an Idealist or a Romanticist or a Realist or a Naturalist or a Symbolist or a Sensitivist or a happy combination of all six. If he have it in him (to write an immortal novel he will write it, and that is all there is to it.

Nevertheless, from another point of view,

one may truly speak of the American Novel as a thing apart, because of the great difficulty in the conditions that attend its successful composition. The American Novel, as we understand it, is not to be a novel constructed on hitherto unheard-of lines, or by some new formula thoughtfully evolved by American writers; but a novel that shall give an adequate and accurate delineation of the life that is lived only in this huge, loose-hung, colossus of a country—a kind of life to which the history of the world affords no parallel whatever. When the Englishman or when the Frenchman sits down to write a novel, he has no difficulty in getting his social *mise en scène* to suit him; he need not, indeed, give it any particular thought at all. The social system that he knows is one whose framework is definite, well ordered, compact, and perfectly intelligible even to the casual foreigner. Everything has its place; everything is regulated and understood; everything, in fact, is obvious and explicable. His background is, in a way, already filled in, and it is only figure-painting that he has to do.

But how strangely different is the case with one who seeks to fix upon his canvas a true impression of American life! A vast kaleido-



scopic mass of color lies before him, shifting and changing with every touch, a society in a fluid state, heterogeneous, anomalous, bizarre, and shot all through with a million piquant incongruities. The boundless wealth and the squalid poverty, the splendor and the crudity, the magnificence and the cheapness, the recklessness and the conservatism, the cynicism and the faith, the intellectual keenness and the unspeakable fatuity, the strong common-sense and the foolish gullibility, the defiant arrogance and the patient meekness, the commercial acuteness and the political stupidity—can any one bring out all these wonderful contrasts in the national character, and yet preserve the slightest trace of verisimilitude and probability? And the strange medley of humanity—the washer-woman of the diggings blossoming out into the *grande dame* who entertains kings and gives her daughters in marriage to princes, the young girl with her “chaste depravity,” the emancipated woman, the canal-boy fighting his way to the headship of the nation, the keen-eyed business man who is to-day cornering the market and to-morrow haranguing the Senate and the day after bringing out an edition of a classic, the curious bits of foreign life and custom embedded in the

midst of an Anglo-Saxon people, and underneath it all a great compact mass of strong and simple and conservative men and women, bearing up the rest and giving cohesion and stability to the whole structure. Any one can *tell* of all these things; any one can sketch them separately and in detail; but who is able and who will ever be able to give one luminous picture of them as a single entity, each in its true relation to the rest, with a sense of proportion and relativity, and in such a way as to make one see and feel the truth of it all?

No such problem ever before confronted the novelist; yet it is not until this problem has been solved that the American Novel in its largest sense will have an actual existence. To begin with, there is not even such a thing as an American type. There is a New England type, and there is a Southern type, and there is a Far Western type; but even these are not perfectly defined, but shade off into each other with many an imperceptible *nuance*, while between them lie all sorts of individual and quite distinctive groups which an American easily recognizes, even though he cannot so easily describe them. In no country in the world are there so many local points of difference; for not only are a Bostonian and a New-

Yorker and a Philadelphian and a Chicagoan and a San Franciscan essentially unlike, but there are distinctions quite as clearly though more subtly to be drawn between a Buffalonian and a Syracusan, between a Baltimorean and a Charlestonian, between a Peorian and a Topekan. These people do not even speak an absolutely identical language, but display such dialectic variations as make the difference of habitat immediately perceptible to the ear of a native. It is only the self-satisfied Englishman who ignores all these bewildering complications. He, of course, with the smug complacency of his kind, will talk with half a dozen Americans, read a few American newspapers, and then introduce into his next novel a "Yankee heiress" or a "Senator from Mikewa" with characteristics evolved from the writer's inner consciousness, and speaking a dialect the like of which was never heard from the mouth of any human being, but which is far more grotesque than if an American novelist should represent an Englishman speaking a blend of Cockney jargon, Dublin Irish, Yorkshire dialect, Welsh *patois*, and Lowland Scotch.

Yet though foreigners do not understand the complicated difficulties that beset the

one who tries to limn in a large way the life and attributes of the American people, our own writers are fully aware of them; and hence it is that they have given us, in the main, not the American Novel, but novels written in America, which is a very different thing. It is not likely that any better work will be done than much of that which already reveals some of the strange nooks and corners of American life. No one, for example, could show a subtler knowledge of New England than Miss Wilkins brings to her intensely vital delineations; no one will ever make us feel more intensely the spirit of the Northwest than Mr. Hamlin Garland does; no one will better draw the dull, raw life of the little towns of Central and Western New York than Mr. Harold Frederic; no one will have a fuller understanding of certain phases of existence in the American metropolis than has Mr. Brander Matthews. But who is to come forth equipped with the knowledge and the insight and the vivid power necessary to draw the picture as a whole, and with a master's touch to fling before us the great national cosmos in its entirety—vital, convincing, real?

But, says some one, there is Mr. Howells; and sure enough, if we grant that Mr. Howells

†

has not succeeded in this task, then so far no one has succeeded. Indeed, we might say *a priori* that Mr. Howells is the one living writer who by the circumstances of training, experience, and exceptional gifts ought to grapple successfully with the difficulties that have proved insurmountable to so many others. Born in one of the Central Western States at a time when these were still in the making, his most impressionable years were spent amid influences that gave him at first hand an intimate knowledge of American life in its evolutionary stage. In an intensely American community, among those who typified all the primitive American virtues of courage, industry, integrity, and thrift, he looked upon the nation-builders as they did their work, and drank in the subtlest understanding of that stratum of society which is the base of the whole gigantic system. And for his purpose it was lucky that he never had the academic training, which, though it sharpens the critical powers, too often narrows the sympathies and deadens the creative faculty. He lived his early years as one of the people, as a printer, as a newspaper reporter, recording continually his impressions, learning the art of writing in a school that teaches clearness, vividness, and

compression, and being all the time in touch with the multifarious types that daily flit before the keen eye of the American journalist. In 1860, with his appointment by President Lincoln as Consul to Venice, began the other side of his preliminary training. From the raw and unformed civilization of the West he passed at once to an environment that was absolutely antithetical, to an atmosphere permeated with memories of old-time magnificence and eloquent of art—an atmosphere instinct with sensuous beauty, in which all sorts of exquisite half-tints become perceptible, and in which the mind awakens to subtle meanings and delicate discriminations. This curious change from Columbus to the Canalazzo, from the Muskingum to Malamocco, was of all things the most ideal as a phase in the training of the literary artist. It gave to him a wholly different point of view, a new standard of comparison, a sense of values and of proportion, and enabled him to see more clearly and with a truer perspective the other life that he had left behind him. Returning to the United States, his experience was enlarged in still different surroundings when he took the editorship of the *Atlantic Monthly* and for many years made one of the set which in those

days stood for all that was refined and cultivated in American letters. The circle of his experience was completed when he passed from Boston to New York and made his home in the cosmopolitan whirl of the American metropolis.

An experience and a training such as these, the like of which are rare indeed, could scarcely fail to give to their possessor a marvellous power, if coupled with the requisite natural gifts. And Mr. Howells has these gifts. A quick eye for what is striking in individuals or in life, a wonderful photographic instinct for detail, a shrewd insight into human motive, a truly American perception of the ludicrous, a natural gift of language, a talent for crystallizing in a phrase or an epithet the essential attribute of any subject, a Frenchman's reverence for *le mot juste*—all these superimposed upon an experience so broad as to be national rather than sectional, and with the advantage of an international point of view, may surely warrant one in saying what has just been said: that if Mr. Howells has not written the American Novel, then no one else as yet has written it. And, indeed, whether he has written it or not, he has at any rate received a reward commensurate with his native gifts and his excep-

tional endowment. He is to-day the most eminent of all living American men of letters. As a novelist he is one of the greatest that our country has yet produced. A new book from his pen is always regarded as an important literary event. His name is known and honored wherever the English language is understood. But has he, as a matter of fact, succeeded at any time in writing the American Novel and not merely clever novels of American life written in America by an American?

It may, perhaps, at first sight seem fanciful, but there can really be little doubt that the limitations which have prevented Mr. Howells from attaining supreme success as a fiction-writer, and that have made his general theory of criticism and of life inadequate, are to be traced directly to certain circumstances which have already been narrated. The first is his long residence in Boston, and the second is his subsequent identification with New York. Naturally, a thesis such as this requires some specific elucidation and defence.

One of these days a work will, perhaps, be written upon the topographical aspects of literature, and in it at least one long chapter will have to be devoted to the influence of Boston upon American letters. Everybody knows



what Boston is—one of the most interesting, and perhaps the most absolutely individual, of American cities. It has a distinctive character and a distinctive flavor that no one has ever failed to recognize. The character is decidedly pronounced, and the flavor is a little tart, with something of what the Boston dialect would describe as a “tang”; but both are wholesome, and, in a way, agreeable. Boston shows us, in fact, almost the sole survival upon American soil of a purely English influence—an influence seen alike in the city’s external appearance, in the temperament of its people, and in their intellectual characteristics. Yet this strong suggestion of England never recalls semi-cosmopolitan London with its multitudinous interests and its consciousness of contact with the whole wide world. It is rather a suggestion of Leicester mingled with Leeds and perhaps a dash of Edinburgh—in fact, of a community not directly in touch with anything beyond its own borders, but very self-centred and compact, and taken up wholly with its own concerns. Its colonialism stands out all over it with both the virtues and the defects of its quality. There are all the integrity of purpose, all the anxious uneasiness about “duty,” the intense self-respect and self-reli-

ance of the New-Englander, the love of truth and justice, the independence and the rectitude ; but there can be found also all the intolerance, all the narrowness, all the impenetrable complacency, and all the intellectual myopia of the provincial Englishman.

Charles Reade, in one of his novels, gives a series of maps to illustrate the point of view of the average English squire. His own county is first depicted in a large, clear map, with its smallest localities carefully noted ; a second map shows England as a whole, about half as large ; then in a third map, drawn very small, is displayed the rest of the world covering a space of about the size of one's thumb-nail. Now this is precisely the way in which a true Bostonian would set forth respectively the town of Boston, the United States as a whole, and the rest of the world, if he were to express his real feelings in terms of comparative cartography ; and it simply means that Boston's true affinities are not at all with the great cities of the earth, but with the provincial English towns. It has their atmosphere to perfection ; so that although we know, as a matter of fact, that its customs are in reality those of the civilized world at large, one never meets a Boston man without a certain vague, yet irre-

pressible feeling that he probably dines at five o'clock in the afternoon, and has a sweet champagne served with the fish.

The truest expression of the Boston spirit in literature is undyingly preserved in the work of Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose claim to immortality is to be found above all in this, that he is the quintessence of Boston, which is in itself the quintessence of New England; and both his foreign travel and his belief in his own cosmopolitanism only serve to give a more striking background to his intense provincialism, and to enhance its piquant flavor. In his verse we find much less to make us think of Hippocrene than of the "kag" of cider. The poetic draught substitutes for the sparkle of the vintage of Champagne the nip of the ginger that gives life to the home-brewed switchel. It is not the poet of tradition who in Holmes appears to be singing to us, but more often the village bard, whose verses appear with beautiful regularity in the left-hand upper corner of the county newspaper, and who has his neat little copy of rhymes for every celebration, from the dinner of the village fire-company to the opening of the ladies' oyster-supper for the benefit of the Orthodox Church. In like manner, when we read certain passages

of the *Autocrat*, we can shut our eyes and pass behind the ostensible personality of the author to his real prototype—the country smarty whose reputation as a funny fellow draws a group of admiring rustics about him as he sits on a cracker-barrel in the village “store” and emits his jokes, pausing only to refresh himself from a contiguous cheese, and to spit profusely upon the cast-iron stove. It may be frankly conceded that the wit is genuine, though suggesting Italian vinegar rather than Attic salt; but it is intensely local, and its similes and metaphors all smack of the cider-mill, the quilting-bee, the town-meeting, and the “vendue.”

The influence of long contact with a community whose spirit is such as this must necessarily stimulate self-consciousness and an introspection that may easily become morbid in its intensity. Yet its effects might well be salutary to one whose own temperament lacked repression and subjectivity. Unfortunately, Mr. Howells already possessed these qualities in excess. Just as the late Edward Henry Palmer, though born of English parents and in an English home, was, from the moment of his birth, in every essential respect an Arab, so Mr. Howells, though a native of Ohio, and sprung

from Welsh stock, has always been essentially a New-Englander. The remarkable self-analysis of his early mentality which he has given us in *A Boy's Town* proves this beyond a doubt. It shows him even as a child to have been self-conscious, introspective, abnormally prone to dwell upon his own sensations and emotions, and to exaggerate them out of all proportion to their real importance. This is the true New England temperament, rooted in individualism, pushing self-analysis to the point of torture, regarding details as of infinite significance, teaching that the part is greater than the whole, and robbing its possessor of a sense of true proportion. But to the literary artist, as to the philosopher, the sense of proportion is everything; for it is the one sovereign antidote to provincialism, philistinism, and morbidity. It and a sense of humor are God's greatest gifts to man; and the first of these He seems in His infinite wisdom to have denied to the typical New-Englander, who, in politics and religion and literature alike, outdoes Protagoras in devotion to the doctrine that the individual is the measure of all things.

That Mr. Howells, with New England traits already so sharply accentuated, should have been definitely and irrevocably stamped with

the New England influence, must therefore be regarded as a distinct misfortune to American literature; for it has narrowed his marvellous gifts of delineation to a single sphere and made him the novelist of a section, when his genius might otherwise have become broadly national. This consideration fully answers the question whether he has written the American Novel, for it shows that he has not; that fate had determined that he should merely write the Novel of New England. This, indeed, he has actually done. He has given us a single novel that is really great, another that is nearly great, and one absolutely perfect story; and each of these is New England to the core.

In *A Modern Instance* one sees what he might have achieved but for the overmastering influence that has fettered and restricted his gifts of portraiture. This book differs essentially from the general run of American novels in its breadth and grasp and color, and especially in being free from a certain thinness that characterizes pretty nearly all the fiction produced in the United States. American novels almost invariably lack body and substance. They have a high, dry, rarefied atmosphere which may be very clear, but in which it is very difficult to breathe for any length

of time. They may possess more subtlety than one finds in an English novel, but they are afflicted with so advanced an anæmia that one always turns from them with a sense of relief to the strong, well-nourished work of the Englishman who shows us bone and muscle and flesh and blood in place of mere nerves, with plenty of good port-wine and roast beef instead of angel-food and ether. But *A Modern Instance* has body to it, and color and movement and vitality. Nearly all of its characters are living, human beings, and not mere psychological studies. It is for this reason that one can read and re-read the book, and find several of its personages dwelling forever after in his memory, as do the men and women whom we have known in life. Bartley Hubbard, for example, is as real as Mr. Howells himself; and the proof of it is found in the fact that, in spite of his baseness and cheapness, we cannot refrain from feeling sorry for him and even at times from almost liking him, just as we feel sorry for him and almost like him when we meet him in our daily life. And Marcia and Kinney and Witherby and the old Squire are living beings, too. Mr. Howells has drawn them with more freedom and boldness than he often shows, and has given himself far less

concern about accumulating mere details. He has, moreover, in a measure cut loose from his own pet theory of fiction-writing. He has not scrupled to give us some fine dramatic touches after the manner of the Romanticists, and has even led us up to an intensely powerful climax in the scene where the quaintly pathetic figure of Squire Gaylord rises in the Western courtroom and pleads for justice and for vengeance in the last words that he ever utters. And this is one of the things that make for genuine realism, because such striking scenes as these are not so rare in life as Mr. Howells sometimes appears to think. Altogether, one cannot say too much of *A Modern Instance*. It bears the true stamp of genius, and it will live as long as anything that American literature can show; for in it the writer stands aside and lets the action evolve itself before the reader's eye, and thus comes very near to meriting the tribute which Hawthorne gave to the cyclopean art of Anthony Trollope when he said that in reading him it seems as though some giant had hewn out a great lump of English soil and set it down before us, with all the human beings on it going about their affairs unconscious of our observation. And this is just what Mr. Howells has done in *A Modern In-*



stance, only it is out of the soil of New England that he has hewn the lump.

*The Rise of Silas Lapham* is, as a whole, below the level of *A Modern Instance*, but it is still a masterly and memorable book. The character of Silas Lapham himself is by all odds the most remarkable piece of portraiture that Mr. Howells has ever done, and it is the only one that attains to the proportions of a broadly national type. The self-made man who works his way up the ladder of material prosperity was never more convincingly depicted; and the portrait is one that is true of the native American everywhere, East as well as West. Rooted in the soil of the farm, this homely figure with its heaviness and gentleness, its simplicity and shrewdness, its rugged honesty and worldly wisdom, its uncouthness and native humor, its quaint conceit and innocent pride tempered always with a hesitating self-depreciation, its eye to the main chance, and its haunting and remorseless conscientiousness—we see them all in this amusing yet profoundly touching creation, which is as vital as anything that human art has ever limned. The opening chapter where Lapham is interviewed by Bartley Hubbard for the *Events*, in the office of the “mineral-paint” manufactory, is

a miracle of condensed pictorial power, in which each word goes with swiftness and precision to the mark. When we have finished it, we know the Colonel through and through in every stage of his career, and if the book had ended there, it would still have given to our native fiction a new and permanent possession.

In *The Lady of the Aroostook* we have the most perfect story that American literature has yet produced. It is the height of literary art, for its finish is as exquisite as its design. One can re-read it a score of times, and always with a fresh enjoyment of its unerring insight and convincing truth, and of the delicate humor that plays along its lines and heightens here and there the scenes of really unstudied emotion that are elsewhere so infrequent in our author's work. But the book is more than a perfect story; it is a concrete illustration of a phase of American civilization, and one that could not be half so well explained in any other way. It depicts social conditions that to a foreigner are quite inexplicable, yet which an American understands so thoroughly that if he had not learned to know the foreign point of view, as Mr. Howells came to know it, it never would occur to him to set it forth in the form

of a story. Mr. Charles Dudley Warner has made a very admirable use of some of the English criticism upon this book in showing how certain of the conditions of American life differ *toto cælo* from anything that a European can understand. That Lydia Blood, a girl from rural New England, and reared amid surroundings that are homely in the extreme, should have all the delicacy and dignity of a "lady," and that she should be considered by the writer and by the personages of the story to be a "lady," was as strange and improbable to the foreign critic as that on reaching Venice she should at once have taken with entire composure a lady's place in its society.

One dwells with fondness on this charming story, which compresses within a hundred pages so much rare portraiture, so much sympathetic knowledge, and so many delicate literary graces. With the possible exception of Staniford, every single character in the book is drawn to perfection, from Ezra Perkins, who drives the Concord stage at South Bradfield, and Aunt Maria and Captain Jenness, to the curiously cosmopolitan circle of Mrs. Erwin's set at Venice—Miss Landini, who invokes impartially the devil and the Deity in her conversation, Rose-Black, the crawling English

artist, Henshaw Erwin with his passion for collecting Americanisms, and Lydia herself, a second Marcia Hubbard, but with finer traits. Every one of these is sketched in with a firm hand and the most artistic sense of contrast; and the changes of scene from South Bradfield to the ship, and from the ship to Venice, give a fascinating and varied background for the movement of the story. The last three or four pages would alone be sufficient to make a lasting reputation for their author, so perfect is the finish of the picture where Staniford, after marrying Lydia, goes with her to visit her old home at South Bradfield in the midst of winter. Mr. Howells has caught the exact feeling of the scene, the people, and the atmosphere, and each successive stroke so artfully heightens the effect that in reading one almost cries out with wonder and delight. The prim house walled in by snow-banks, the social evening with the minister and his wife, which Aunt Maria, after passing coffee and sponge-cake, felt to be so brilliant as to be almost wicked, and, above all, the symbolic parlor-lamp of pea-green glass with a large red woollen wick—that parlor-lamp alone is a sufficient claim to immortality, for its glow, somehow or other, makes the whole life and

aspect of South Bradfield perceptible at a glance.

The remembrance of this story heightens one's regret that among all the other work that Mr. Howells has given us, nothing else is found quite worthy of being set beside it ; for as time went on the spell of Boston grew stronger and stronger upon him, and we find less and less of the comparative freedom and spaciousness that appear in the three fine books that we have just enumerated. Individualism marked him for its own. He began to abuse his gift of observation. Instead of going always swiftly and unerringly to the very heart of things, he sometimes seemed to consider it sufficient to accumulate a multiplicity of trivial details and to let a microscopic fidelity take the place of a broader sympathy. The keenness of vision involved in some of his details is almost startling, but in the end this sort of thing defeats its own purpose, for the reader is so astonished by the photographic accuracy of the observer, that his attention is distracted from the march of events, and he can think only of how very clever Mr. Howells is. In other words, the brilliancy of the novelist casts into a semi-shadow the evolution of the novel, and Mr. Howells is the fatally successful rival of his own creations.

It is precisely in this respect that Thackeray too often suffers in comparison with Dickens; for although his art is infinitely greater, it is not always the art that conceals itself, but an art that is too consciously exposed to the reader's view. Thus when Dickens takes us with Pecksniff into Mrs. Todgers's immortal lodging-house, we actually go there. We snuff the sickly gushes of soup with our own noses, we see with our own eyes the worn-out floor-cloth and the table with its splashes of gravy, we hear with our own ears the convivial wit of Mr. Jenkins and the other commercial gentlemen, and for the moment Dickens has nothing to do with it at all. But when Thackeray describes the similar *ménage* of the Gann family in *A Shabby Genteel Story*, it is not we who see it for ourselves, but it is Thackeray who is telling us what he has seen. We are kept in a constant state of admiration over the extraordinary accuracy of his vision. He is always present in his own person; and, just as Mr. George Brandon reported it all to the Viscount Cinqbars, so Thackeray reports it to us and in a somewhat similar spirit, with a constant appeal to "the principle in us that sniffs." It is all very brilliant; but Mr. Howells has himself admitted that it has its defects; that

it is too sophisticated; and that if, by comparison, the magic of Dickens be rough magic and wholly elemental, it is at least grandly elemental and deals with larger moods than those that respond merely to tastes and preferences.

So it is that all of Mr. Howells's novels, except the ones already noted as exceptions, are permeated with this suggestion of his own individuality, and with that excessive elaboration which prevents us from seeing the wood by reason of the trees. The writer stands between us and his books. Moreover, though the details of his work may be often remarkably characteristic and typical, their combination is not necessarily either characteristic or typical; and while his personages may be individually realistic, in combination they are often quite unreal in that they show no life and movement and spontaneity. One is reminded by them of a painting in which every figure is admirably finished, but in which, nevertheless, the effect of the whole is stiff and wooden. Mr. Howells's gallery, in other words, contains an immense array of careful sketches, but only a very few successful pictures. And this is why of his later books even the most conscientious reader retains only a shadowy and confused impression. The titles and scenes

and plots (so far as there are any plots discernible) are all blurred and jumbled together; and just a few strongly drawn individual portraits stand out in a hopeless if splendid isolation. One recalls the striking figure of the embezzler Northwick in *The Quality of Mercy*, wherein one scene is matchless in its psychology; the gawky youth in *The Minister's Charge*; Helen Harkness, the intensely Bostonian type of girl in *A Woman's Reason*, who thinks that "the Indian trade" confers an aristocratic *cachet*; and possibly Clara Kingsbury, though one may express a conscientious doubt whether even in Boston the ladies of the Brahminical set are wont to speak of their "gentleman friends;" but what befell these persons the present writer, at least, is unable to recall; and he has found it necessary, at the present time, in every case to search through his collection of Mr. Howells's books in order to be quite certain that he has assigned each character mentioned to its proper source.

The individual note is heard with even greater clearness in our author's literary criticism, for here it has appeared to him unnecessary to do much more than state his own opinions with a dogmatism which is not less real because it is so often mingled with felicitous phrases



and spiced with bits of epigram. Within the last two or three years, in fact, he has begun to issue books whose very titles—*My Literary Passions* and *Impressions and Experiences*—quite frankly indicate how purely personal to himself his judgments are. In these books we are told not only what opinions he has formed, but the exact circumstances under which he came to form them ; who first led him to read this and that ; whether he was at home or at his uncle's when he made his first acquaintance with an author ; that he was shelling peas when he first heard of *Don Quixote* ; that it was his elder brother who introduced him to Captain Marryat ; with an infinite deal of similar personal detail continuously presupposing that the reader must regard these incidental facts as of extreme importance. In his latest volume he even devotes some thirty or forty pages to the chronicle of his personal experiences with beggars.

In another writer this would be egoism of a gigantic growth ; but in Mr. Howells it is only the individualism of the New-Englander expressing itself in terms of literary criticism. Yet to this sort of thing is due a good deal of the exasperation that some of Mr. Howells's opinions have excited ; for while they are sim-

ply the personal views of an individual, they are sometimes put forth as though they were meant to found a school of criticism and to abolish the canons that have been built upon the intellectual experience of centuries. It is all very well for Mr. Howells, as an individual, to thrust Romanticism into his ash-barrel, as being nothing but a piece of literary junk; but when he sets up as a master of criticism, the matter comes to be of more importance, and one may then quite reasonably question alike his authority and his critical capacity. A critic who prefers Realism to Romanticism is well within his rights; but when he would hoot Romanticism out of existence altogether simply because it does not happen to appeal to him, then we may properly suspect him of a defective equipment. The curious thing about Mr. Howells is that he makes his own inability to appreciate certain phases of literature an additional claim upon our attention. Thus, in the chronicle of his literary passions, he heads a chapter with the name of Scott, apparently for the sole purpose of telling us, as he does, that though he has read Scott's novels, he did so wholly from a sense of duty, and that little or nothing of them remains with him at the present time. Now when a literary

critic comes forward and declares that he has found nothing touching and tender in the character of Jeanie Deans, nothing humorous in the portrayal of Andrew Fairservice, nothing impressively terrible in the story of Ravenswood, nothing breathlessly exciting in the unravelling of Bertram's weird, and nothing that stirs the blood like a trumpet-call in the splendid pictures of chivalry that stud the pages of *Ivanhoe*, and yet in the same breath announces that Mr. J. W. De Forest is one of the greatest of living novelists, then we may rightly liken such a critic to a person who assures us of his own ability as a judge of painting, and cites as one of his chief qualifications the fact that he is color-blind, and cannot tell blue from green.

It is obvious that one so sensitive as Mr. Howells to external impressions must be sensibly affected by his environment; and here, I think, is found an explanation of the comparative inferiority of many of his later novels. This brings us to the second part of our original thesis—the effect upon his genius and its expression of his final removal from Boston to New York. One might argue, adducing the facts already set forth, that this change was precisely the thing needed to counteract the

excessive individuality and concentration of his literary methods. But this line of argument leaves out of sight, first, the fact that the change was made only after Mr. Howells's formative period was over, and that hence it occurred too late; and it ignores, in the second place, the peculiar influence which New York exerts upon the typical Bostonian.

It was long ago remarked by some superficial observer that New York is in reality not an American city at all; and the saying has been so constantly repeated by those who ought to have known better, that it has come to be regarded as axiomatic in its truth. But as a matter of fact, nothing could be more absolutely false; for, apart from some of its external characteristics, New York is the most truly American city in existence—the only city that has assimilated and moulded into a whole all the attributes of our people, blending them so perfectly as to yield for a result not a Northern or a Southern or an Eastern or a Western product, but one that is simply and typically American. And in doing this it has happily eliminated one quality that is elsewhere the bane of the American temperament—the quality of self-consciousness. For in its

own way the self-consciousness of Chicago, for example, is as marked as the self-consciousness of Boston, only the manifestation of it is different. Boston, being the old maid of American cities, displays the self-consciousness of primness; while Chicago, the hobbledehoy of American cities, is troubled by the self-consciousness of overgrowth, and, so to speak, is always concerned as to what to do with its feet and hands, and troubled by the uneasy consciousness that its legs are far too long; while if it wishes to speak impressively, its voice flies off the handle and ends in a falsetto squeak. In either city the individual is the unit of the whole, and is always sure of his own importance. But New York, whose quality is greatness rather than mere bigness, takes no account of the individual, and the individual knows it. The giant forces that are here at play are too vast for any one to control. They act and react with such a mighty sweep and power as to dwarf the individual altogether, who resembles a tiny bird that has built its nest in the beam of some colossal engine. It knows the movements of the great machine, it does not dread it, and it even comes to love it for its tremendous energy; but it would no more think of trying to direct or check it than

one of us would think of bridling a cyclone or staying the plunge of a water-spout. In the sphere of civics the immensity of this great *Weltstadt* has its disadvantages, but from every other point of view it is wonderful and inspiring. No single influence can affect it. No great university can ever leaven it as Harvard has leavened Boston; no great literary movement can ever make an impression on it; no wave of religious excitement can ever spread through all its channels; no political cataclysm can disorganize the play of its colossal forces. Men of commanding influence and national reputation come to New York, and take their places meekly far down the line; an invading army would be run in by the police. The giant swallows everything, takes everything to itself, and then moves on unconscious of it and unchanged. Nothing can be more inspiring to one who knows it well, and who exults in the largeness and power and magnificence of it all.

But the effect of it upon the Bostonian born is very curious. Catch a typical Bostonian and suddenly transfer him to the heart of Brooklyn, or Philadelphia, or New Orleans, or San Francisco, or even of Chicago, and while he will recognize the unfamiliarity of his new

environment, it will not interfere with his enjoyment. He is still an important individual; he is still some one to be reckoned with; and those who meet him will appreciate the fact because they, too, are important individuals who count. But plump him down in the middle of New York, and the difference is startling. A great bewilderment comes over him. He feels that he has somehow got out of his own snug little corner into a great whirl that bewilders him and makes him dizzy. He is uneasily conscious that he has been dwarfed to a mere human atom; his complacency vanishes; he knows that his importance has shrunk into nothingness, and he doesn't like it. He resembles a small mouse that has crept timidly out into a vast hall, and then, appalled by the unwonted vista, scuds back to its hole with squeaks of genuine dismay.

Mr. Howells has himself expressed this feeling in *Their Wedding Journey*, when Basil March and Isabel, fresh from the city of the triple mountain, stand before Grace Church and gaze up and down Broadway. And he has, in spite of himself, distilled the same feeling into those books of his that, written under the oppression of his new environment, convey something of that oppression to his readers'

minds. In *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and *The World of Chance* one finds no more the unforced humor and the cheerful spontaneity of his earlier novels. He has become melancholy, and with the true New England sense of duty, he has begun to feel that he has a "mission."

It was in New York, apparently, that Mr. Howells made the discovery that while there are in the world people who have plenty of money, there are also people who haven't any at all to speak of; that there are people who are harshly used by their employers, people who are often ill, people who live in squalid tenements—people, in a word, who are unhappy through no fault of their own. To a philosophical observer these and other facts of the kind discovered by Mr. Howells are hardly so pathetic as the thoroughly *naïf* surprise with which Mr. Howells suddenly became conscious of their existence; and fully as pathetic also is the generous but quite inartistic impulse that has led him to spoil his novels in order to impart to others some knowledge of his discovery. For as soon as he began to write stories with an obvious *Tendenz* and permeated with all the uneasiness of the Bostonian who is consciously out of his element, the lit-



erary quality of his work deteriorated in a perceptible manner. Who can recall anything of the two books just named except squalor, and unhappiness, and cheap eating-houses, and commonplace characters of all grades of fatuity, and a general feeling that the author evidently thinks the times are out of joint? And so, doubtless, they are, and always were, for that matter; but Mr. Howells is not going to set them right by publishing vague pictures of Altruria, and asperging all of us with his diluted slops of Socialism. For everything will go on precisely as before; and all that he will have accomplished will be the transformation of a great literary artist into a gloomy and ineffectual Bellamy.

But the depression which has grown upon Mr. Howells in the past few years has extended beyond his view of existing social conditions, and has been formulated into a semi-pessimistic theory of life. This phase of his thought finds its fullest expression in his verse, some of which is really remarkable in its condensed expression of a sort of wondering despair, poignant and terrible. No single poem better reveals this state of mind than the following from his *Stops of Various Quills*:

"I was not asked if I should like to come,  
I have not seen my host here since I came,  
Or had a word of welcome in his name.  
Some say that we shall never see him, and some  
That we shall see him elsewhere, and then know  
Why we were bid. How long I am to stay  
I have not the least notion. None, they say,  
Was ever told when he should come or go,  
But every now and then there bursts upon  
The song and mirth a lamentable noise,  
A sound of shrieks and sobs, that strikes our joys  
Dumb in our breasts; and then, some one is gone.  
They say we meet him. None knows where or  
when.  
We know we shall not meet him here again."

And there comes up continually his old lament  
over the inequality that everywhere marks the  
lot of man. The sight of poverty makes him  
shudder, and the sight of riches makes him  
shudder, too. He draws us a picture of a gay  
company dancing among scarlet flowers to the  
sound of music, and then he goes on :

"I looked again and saw that flowery space  
Stirring as if alive, beneath the tread  
That rested now upon an old man's head  
And now upon a baby's gasping face,  
Or mother's bosom, or the rounded grace  
Of a girl's throat; and what had seemed the red  
Of flowers was blood, in gouts and gushes shed  
From hearts that broke under that frolic pace.

And now and then from out the dreadful floor  
An arm or brow was lifted from the rest,  
As if to strike in madness, or implore  
For mercy; and anon some suffering breast  
Heaved from the mass and sank; and as before  
The revellers above them thronged and prest."

Mr. Howells has, indeed, learned rather late in life a great fact which men, in general, apprehend after a very few years of observation. He has discovered that justice does not enter into the scheme of our existence here. And this is true. There is faith and there is truth, there are charity and chastity and honesty, but in all the world (speaking *more humano*) there is no such thing as justice. And this discovery startles and appalls him, for here again his individualism robs him of a sense of true proportion. It is the old New England trait, and it must be admitted that in religion and philosophy it is almost universal among men, though quite unreasoning and absurd. It is the conviction of the individual that in the great plan of the universe he himself, his feelings, and his fate are of some importance. Doubtless, for instance, if Mr. Howells thinks that the narrative of his having given half a dollar to a beggar is of sufficient interest to the world at large to be preserved in several pages of printed text,

he also thinks that the question of his eternal welfare attains an importance of inconceivable vastness. But all this sort of feeling, so common in popular religious discussion, most curiously fails to recognize the infinite littleness of the individual and of the world itself. There are some who, giving law to the Deity, tell us that the loss of a single soul would be a calamity so appalling as to be quite inconceivable; but in reality if all the men and women who ever lived upon this earth and who ever will inhabit it were swept into Gehenna at a stroke, what would be the real importance of it among the myriads of vigintillions of greater and more glorious worlds that swarm amid the infinity of space? Suppose that once upon a time, thousands of years ago, in a far-distant quarter of our globe something once went wrong with a mote in a sunbeam; this would not be a very vital fact in the history of the world. Yet it would really be relatively of far more importance than, in its relation to the whole infinite universe, would be the annihilation of the mote of a world itself with all the human atoms that breed and die upon it. Why, even in his own country and among his own kind, the individual does not count. Let him be racked with pain or tortured by all the

agony that mind and body can endure, and if he will but stand in his doorway he will see the little children laughing in the sunshine and hear the cackle of men and women to whom he is not even so much as a name. Or, like Iván Ilyitch, he may lie hopeless and alone, watching his life ebb hourly away, and no one will really care. His wife, who loves him and whom he loves, will feel no more than a fleeting sorrow; his child, whom he has watched and cherished from its birth, will never understand his anguish; and both of them in the end will half resent an affliction that acts as a check upon their harmless pleasures. Nor can the individual cry out against this as a wrong, for God has willed it, and what He wills is right.

The trouble with Mr. Howells is that he is a pessimist who has as yet learned only the alphabet of pessimism. His eyes are opened to the truth, yet he still hopes on, and hence is torn with endless doubts. In speaking of one author he says :

“While I read him I was in a world where right came out best, as I believe it will yet do in this world; and where merit was crowned with the success which I believe will yet attend it in our daily life, untrammelled by economic circumstances.”

But there can really be no permanent halting-place between optimism and pessimism ; and he who, like Mr. Howells, is pessimistic only up to a certain point lives in an inferno of his own creation ; for he sees the evils of existence and is yet tormented by a hope that never can be realized. Therefore, if one would be at peace, he should be frankly either a consistent optimist or a profound pessimist ; for it is a mistake to suppose that the pessimist is unhappy. He is not. He is simply one who has no illusions, and who has once for all accepted the inevitable. "He that is down need fear no fall ;" and when we come to recognize the fact that the very worst has happened to us in being born, we can share the cheerfulness of him for whom this life has no surprises. Nor, however dark the world may appear to him, does he wish to leave it. His philosophy is that of the sagacious Greek who taught with great persuasiveness the doctrine that life is no better than death, but who, when one of his auditors asked him why, if life be no better than death, he did not hasten to leave it, replied, "Because death is no better than life."

And, in fact, this is somewhat less than the entire truth, for it is always possible that death may be even worse than life. However firmly

we may hold to the teachings of religion, we can never escape the feeling that haunted the great Apostle to the Gentiles when he expressed the fear that even after he had done everything he might still perchance become a castaway. One may live up to such light as he possesses, yet he can never quite be sure that his little all will be acceptable, or that when the time arrives for the dissolution of the ties that bind the body and the soul, the sentient part of him may not be doomed to go forth shuddering into infinite loneliness and everlasting gloom.

Hence, the true pessimist is not concerned with little things or with the multifarious evils that he sees about him. He knows that nothing can be done; that, suffer as he may, he cannot help himself; and that in the universal scheme it really doesn't matter. Therefore his mind is untrammelled by the cares and the anxieties that beset his fellows. If he hopes for nothing, he also fears nothing, and he alone can see the real unimportance of all human cares. Physical pain may torture him, bereavement may wring his heart and force from him a cry of anguish; yet even then he can perceive the underlying humor of it all, the uselessness of complaint when one is spitted on the skewer

of destiny like a fly impaled upon a pin. So he schools himself to patience, and strives to acquire, not the sullen apathy of the Stoic, but the splendid ataraxy that Epicurus taught. Imbued with this, and knowing that whatever may befall him there is nothing that can happen otherwise than God has willed it, he meets the events of life with calm composure, looking upon them all with an unruffled front, and with something of the divine serenity that marks the life of the immortal gods.

In this short chapter, then, there have been briefly indicated what seem to be the salient points in the work of Mr. Howells—his artistry, his power of delineation, his mastery of detail, and his unerring keenness of observation; and, on the other hand, the limitations that arise from too great subtlety, from lack of objectivity, and from an imperfectly developed philosophy of life. Were it within the scope of this paper to dwell upon his personality, much more might well be said; but it is unnecessary. Every one who knows his work can feel how fine a nature lies behind it, how much love of truth and justice, how much charity, how much devotion to all that is best and noblest; and every one who knows the man himself can tell of his unassuming kindli-



ness, of his generosity to young writers who have still their spurs to win, and of all the traits that make his character so winning and so truly typical of the high-minded American gentleman.



MARCEL PRÉVOST



## MARCEL PRÉVOST

M. MARCEL PRÉVOST is a very interesting figure in the contemporaneous records of French literature. Making his first appearance as an author only seven or eight years ago with two not very successful books, he has since then reached the position of a writer whose popularity places him among the very first of Parisian novelists. His books run into forty, fifty, or sixty editions within a few months of their first publication, and they have at last become a topic of discussion in England, where Mr. Andrew Lang has lately been considering their author's merits; while the only productions of his that have as yet been rendered into English have appeared in this country within the past two years.

M. Prévost did not have long to wait for critical recognition—a fact that in itself bears striking testimony to the character of his literary workmanship; for in a country where the level of artistic excellence is so very high, and

where the critics, as a matter of duty, look coldly upon the productions of a young and aspiring writer who has still to show that he possesses something more than superficial cleverness and certain interesting tricks of style, it is not easy to attract the serious notice of a literary Rhadamanthus. M. Prévost's third novel, however, *Mlle. Jaufré*, which appeared in 1890, gained at once the attention of no less an authority than Jules Lemaître, who praised the book most warmly in his *Impressions Littéraires*; while *La Confession d'un Amant*, which was published in the following year, broke through even the austere reserve with which M. Ferdinand Brunetière regards contemporary writers, and forced from him a cautiously uttered though very genuine note of admiration. *L'Automne d'une Femme*, a subtle study of the woman whose *grande passion* comes to her only after the age of thirty years, deepened the impression made by its immediate predecessors. Then followed M. Prévost's first great popular success in two volumes of short stories, entitled respectively *Lettres de Femmes* and *Nouvelles Lettres de Femmes*, which had an immense and instantaneous vogue, as did a somewhat similar collection entitled *Notre*

*Compagne*, whose fortieth edition was announced within three months after the volume first saw the light.

A writer who in eight short years has won alike the commendation of the critics and the attention of the public is certainly deserving of some serious consideration. His own countrymen have compared him with George Sand and with M. Paul Bourget; and there are, indeed, some striking points of close resemblance in his work to that of these two writers; but in each case the comparison, in part at least, does something less than justice to M. Prévost. His style, indeed, has much in common with the style of Mme. Dudevant. It has her great facility and charm; and, too, her literary watchword "idealize, idealize," is also his, as he himself declared not very long ago; but with him this fluency does not, as hers did, pass into fluidity, while the touch of ideality is never for an instant suffered to obscure that clear impression of the actual which is as well sustained by him as by the stoutest champions of realism. For his conception of idealism makes it to be not so much a thing apart from real life and quite beyond it, as an essential feature of that life itself. Thus, in a paper on Romanticism, he asserts for the Romantic

a lasting place in the sum of human life, a place in close association with the sphere of the emotions, of the passions, and of the imagination. And in this he is far wiser than Mr. Howells, for instance, who, while kindly granting to the Romantic an actual existence in our psychical and even in our material experience, does hold it to be so utterly exceptional as to rule it out of literary use and make it only the rouge and rattle of a meretricious art—a view of which, I think, each human life, if fully known, could prove the falsity.

No less injustice is, in my opinion, done by any hard and fast comparison of M. Prévost's work with that of M. Paul Bourget. Both writers are extremely psychological, but with a difference. M. Bourget is psychological and little else. His novels, while their exposition of conflicting motives is most curiously keen, and while he can pursue it through all its convolutions and tortuous complications, are nevertheless, or rather for this very reason, at times distinctly tedious. They often seem almost to have the character of laboratory demonstrations, and one's head often aches as he labors through their fine-spun mazes of analysis. But M. Prévost, while also very subtle, does not make his psychological stud-



ies so portentous, nor spin them out to such a grievous length. He rather, by a few masterly and incisive touches, throws a vivid light into the very heart of a situation, reveals as by a flash a mental attitude, and thus accomplishes whatever M. Bourget can accomplish with all his slow accumulation of detail. It may be that M. Bourget's psychology is more profound; but it is certain that M. Prévost's is much better held in hand, and that his use of it is far more consonant with literary art. It helps, in other words, his purpose; it does not constitute that purpose. It is with him a means and not an end.

In fact, if I were asked to name a modern writer as being one to whom M. Prévost is in his workmanship most closely kin, I should unhesitatingly choose out Guy de Maupassant. M. Prévost possesses the same swift, definite, and unerring manner, the same compactness, the same muscular grasp upon his material, the same deft touch and lucid presentation. Yet here, again, one must at once begin to qualify. In spite of a most striking superficial likeness, the spirit of the two is not the same. M. de Maupassant was saturated with the joyless pessimism of modern France. His cynical acceptance of the darkest side of

life as wholly normal, his torturing, agonizing hopelessness, the moral gloom of his horizon, the grim despair that, as one reads his work, sink down upon the heart like an overpowering weight—all these are alien to the pages of Marcel Prévost. For he is not, in many of his moods, a Frenchman of the modern school, but rather a reversion to an earlier type, the Frenchman of the sixteenth century, the *gail-lard*, the gay adventurer, witty and gallant, convinced that he is wholly irresistible, and with a roguish eye wide open for some *bonne fortune*. This spirit is most clearly seen in his short stories, than which no better illustration of the *esprit Gaulois* can be found; and here the temperamental contrast and also the stylistic likeness are most readily observed. Nor can one say, in opposition to this view, that Maupassant has also lighter moods and even moments of true tenderness, as shown respectively in *La Patronne*, that most audacious story of a young *étudiant de droit*, and in *Le Père de Simon*. For the difference lies just here: when Maupassant is simply droll or simply tender, he is not really at his best, while Prévost is. The finest work of Maupassant is never seen in tales like these, but in such bits of concentrated cynicism as *Un*

*Sage* and *Boule de Suif*; while Prévost's genius is most happy in those witty and ingenious tales, of which *La Médaille* and *La Nuit de Raymonde* are typical illustrations; and when he takes a turn at cynicism he is distinctly ill at ease and less artistic.

A critical comparison of the novels of the two will lead one to the same conclusion. Take, for example, Maupassant's powerful but quite repulsive *Bel Ami* and read it side by side with Prévost's *L'Automne d'une Femme*. In *Bel Ami* is shown a world of absolute and utter baseness, a world of prostitutes and scoundrels. Not one of all its characters is anything but vile, from the hero of the book (a sorry hero) to the nymphomaniac Clotilde de Marelle, and Mme. Walter, and her sly, precocious daughter Suzanne. This unrelieved depravity, as Mr. Henry James has pointed out, is really inartistic; for the very effect which the writer apparently desires to produce would have been more strikingly attained had he availed himself of the aid of contrast and drawn his darkest figures on a lighter background; and furthermore, the mind instinctively revolts from the inherent falsity of such a picture, feeling at once that if mankind and womankind had really sunk so low as

this, society could not be held together for a single day.

Far different is the moral and artistic attitude of M. Prévost in *L'Automne d'une Femme*. It may be said that this fine novel, by far the best its author has produced, is one whose story is extremely sad; and this is true. But sadness is a thing far different from horror and despair; and neither horror nor despair finds any place in the melancholy half-light of this searching study. It tells, to summarize it very briefly, of a charming and pure-minded woman, Julie Surgère, married, or rather sold, as a young girl to a repellent brute, who presently is stricken by a strange disease that makes of him a living corpse. The years go on, and at last the son of one of her husband's partners, Maurice Artoy, a young man, crosses her path. She nurses him through an illness, and insensibly drifts into a tender and self-sacrificing love for him, a love that is her first. But she is much older than he, and in time he is attracted by the fresher beauty of a young girl, Claire Esquier, the daughter of another partner, and an inmate of her own home. The elder woman, who is fond of Claire, and who sees that Maurice every day is growing colder, renounces him and all her dreams of happiness, and lets

him marry her unconscious rival, while she herself suffers in silence and looks forward to a life of sorrow and self-abnegation. The treatment of this theme is the antithesis of anything that can be found in Maupassant. The hero of the book, Maurice Artoy, is, to be sure, as disagreeable as any of Maupassant's creations. He is a sentimental sensualist, and, if possible, is more repulsive even than Georges Duroy in *Bel Ami*—Duroy the thorough-paced blackguard, the sublimation of a type that finds its genesis in the *maquereau* of the Faubourg St. Antoine. But Artoy's baseness and his selfishness serve only to bring out in strong relief the truth and beauty of the other characters—of Claire, the innocent young girl, her father Jean Esquier, the soul of honor and fidelity, and Julie Surgère herself, loving wrongfully, indeed, but with a love which is more than half maternal, and whose sacrifice consigns her to a life of sorrow that expiates her fault. There is passion here, and there is sin; but there are also remorse and repentance and an infinite tenderness. Nothing could be more admirable than the self-restraint with which M. Prévost has managed the development of the theme, and nothing more delicate than the art that finds expression in this novel,

which as the study of a love outworn need not avoid comparison with George Sand's great masterpiece, *Lucrezia Floriani*.

From what has now been said it can be readily inferred what are the leading qualities that give M. Prévost his marked distinction: a nearly perfect style, a very subtle insight into all the workings of the human mind, and a touch of ideality that differentiates his work from that of the uncompromising realists who ignore the one thing that is wanting to breathe life into their creations and make them truly vital and convincing. His minor literary virtues are equally conspicuous. Some one has said of the modern pessimistic school in fiction, whose foremost representative to-day is Gabriele D'Annunzio, that they are afraid to be amusing; and to this generalization M. Prévost is a most agreeable exception. A rare and irresistible drollery abounds in nearly all his lesser fiction; and even his most cynical tales are lightened and relieved by a brilliant wit that is very far to seek in most of his contemporaries. His ingenuity and intellectual dexterity are also most surprising; so that one's breath is often taken quite away by the unexpectedness and audacity of his invention. Sometimes, again, he touches on the sphere of

the mysterious and occult, and then his art recalls the art of Poe, as in *La Demoiselle au Chat d'Or*, a curiously weird conception whose power is enhanced by the simplicity and restraint of the form in which the narrative is cast.

It must, of course, be understood that what has just been said of M. Prévost's work is said of what is best in all that work. He has undoubtedly at times sunk far below his higher level, and has put his name to things that bear the marks of unadulterated mediocrity. Two general criticisms have been levelled at him and may very briefly be considered here. The first is one that equally applies to Maupassant and many others of the writers of French fiction. The very French and, to an Anglo-Saxon mind, unpardonable freedom that he often gives himself in his selection of a theme, makes many of his works, and nearly all his shorter stories, quite impossible for any but a Frenchman to admire without a qualm. With him the *conte leste* touches on the very limits of audacity and unreserve; and even the most hardened reader of contemporary continental fiction is sometimes startled by the unexpected daring of his fancy.

Yet this much may at least be said in his

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behalf. He never, like M. de Maupassant, descends to any coarseness or offensiveness of phrase, but writes invariably in language whose discretion and extraordinary delicacy in part redeem his subject from that grossness and offensiveness which in the hands of any purely naturalistic writer it would certainly possess. In all that he has published, not a single page exists so thoroughly detestable as Maupassant's *La Femme de Paul*, of which the hideous brutality is fitly matched by its inartistic crudity of treatment. In Prévost's little story called *Au Cabaret* the same theme is just touched upon, yet the difference in the handling is remarkable. The underlying thought is one that no Anglo-Saxon would ever for a moment dream of using as the basis of a story; but in Prévost's hands it is a mere suggestion rather than a boldly voiced *motif*; and the tale itself, in spite of its essential impropriety, leaves on the mind no lingering taint, but rather, by the artful use of contrast, a strong impression of the power of innocence and of the lurking good that lingers somewhere even in the loathliest. And so in all his work there can be found a glimpse, a hint, of something better, a certain humanity and warmth that save the writer and the reader, too, from an



unmitigated cynicism. Nor should one fail to note that some of his most perfect writing is morally impeccable. He has written several short stories that are as pure in thought as they are exquisite in literary finish, and these display, as in a drop of crystal, all his finest gifts—his power of compression, his unerring insight into character, his humor, his sympathy, and his moving pathos.

Besides the censure of the moralist, however, M. Prévost has often had to meet another criticism which, from the artistic point of view, is far more serious. Not long ago I said to a distinguished critic who had spoken rather slightly of Prévost's work:

"What is the real reason for your prejudice against Prévost? Why will you not admit his right to rank with Maupassant?"

And he replied:

"Because I feel that Maupassant is quite sincere and that Prévost is not."

This confident assertion of his "insincerity" is rather common among the critics of Prévost, though less, I think, in France than in this country, where it has almost become a formula. It rests, in my opinion, wholly on a desultory and imperfect knowledge of his writings. In the case of the critic who has just been quoted, a

further conversation showed that he had never read a single one of Prévost's longer novels, nor even all his shorter stories; and he very frankly said that his opinion was largely the result of some casual conversation with Prévost himself. How thoroughly unfair is any judgment formed in such a fashion, one scarcely needs to say. As a matter of fact, this unfavorable opinion in general is chiefly due to the bad impression produced by a single novel of Prévost's, *Les Demi-Vierges*. It is, indeed, unfortunate that of all his writings this was the first to be rendered into English. It is still more unfortunate that he ever wrote it at all, for it is entirely unworthy of his genius. A bit of pure sensationalism and distorted psychology, untrue to life and quite offensive in its treatment, it shows the writer at his very worst, and strikes a thoroughly discordant note. Whoever judges him by this may readily be pardoned for ranking him with writers like Adolphe Belot and Paul Ginisty; but surely no serious criticism of a literary artist ought ever to be made to rest upon the reading of a single book.

*Le Jardin Secret*, the latest novel that M. Prévost has written, has a very special interest. Of all his works this is the one that from

the very moment of its publication met a perfectly respectful treatment at the critics' hands, and it may, I think, be styled one of the most important works of fiction that the French have lately given us. It had in France, of course, the great advantage of being the first long novel written by its author since his literary gifts were generally recognized; but quite apart from this, it well deserves a careful study: and I think that from some points of view its interest is even greater for an English or an American reader than for the fellow-countrymen of its creator.

Its story is narrated by one Mme. Marthe Lecoudrier, who is its central figure. She is the wife of Jean Lecoudrier, the head of a department in a banking-house, Le Crédit Commercial, and hence the story has to do with the life and the environment of the *bourgeoisie médiocre*. At the commencement of the novel, M. Lecoudrier has left her for a few days' visit to his early home, Ingrandes, where his uncle has just died and willed him a small property. The wife, sitting alone throughout the evening in her apartment, with her little daughter sleeping quietly in an adjoining room, falls into a reminiscent mood, and for the first time in many years begins to summon up the recol-

lections of her girlhood, of *la Marthe d'autrefois*, a girl ambitious, eager for a brilliant career, hopeful of a literary, and ultimately of a social, triumph. As she recalls her past, she smiles at the contrast afforded by her present life, the life of a *bonne bourgeoisie*, satisfied with a humdrum existence and with long, uneventful days of peace and commonplace contentment. Presently her eye falls upon a drawer of her husband's desk from which a bunch of keys projects. Without much purpose she opens it and half mechanically turns over a packet of papers which the drawer contains. At once her attention is arrested. With a beating heart she unties the packet and finds in it the evidence of a secret whose existence she had never dreamed of. It holds a number of photographs, a bunch of artificial flowers from a woman's hat, letters signed with the names of women quite unknown to her, a child's portrait, and finally a bundle of government securities to the value of thirty thousand francs or more, from which the coupons have been regularly cut. A careful reading of the letters and an examination of the other articles lead her irresistibly to certain definite conclusions: that her husband has been for years untrue to her, that he has somewhere another child, and

that unknown to her he has set apart a sum of money whose income is devoted to the purposes of the other life that he has lived apart from her. But there is even more to be inferred than this. A number of letters from Ingrandes, written apparently by a confidential servant, give her reasons for believing that her husband's family is one afflicted by a tendency to epilepsy; and she recalls with a thrill of horror certain mysterious seizures that he has sometimes suffered from, and that have once or twice already appeared in her own young child. Her heart dies within her as she sits down to consider the revelation that has come to her. She has been deceived in every possible way in which a woman can be duped, and for the moment she is stunned. A terrible feeling of despair comes over her, followed by a flaming fever of indignation. Yet may she not be quite mistaken? May there not be, after all, an explanation possible that will be consistent with her husband's truth and constancy? When morning comes she hurries to an agency which gives *renseignements intimes particuliers dans l'intérêt des familles*—in other words, a sort of private detective bureau. To its chief she confides the compromising packet and asks

for *informations discrètes*. An immediate and absolute divorce is in her mind, and she waits in a state of almost unendurable impatience for the confirmation of the apparent facts, and for the evidence that will set her free from a man so stained with treachery. For the moment a dumb, helpless rage inspires her—a passionate longing for revenge. Soon, however, when another day has dragged along, a strong reaction comes upon her, a physical lassitude, a sort of moral cowardice resulting from an exhausting waste of energy.

"I feel like letting everything just go, without taking the trouble to set matters right, without saying a word to my husband, without doing a single thing. . . . For a woman nearly forty years of age to leave her home like one of Ibsen's heroines, just because she has been deceived—this really seems to me, at three o'clock in the afternoon, somewhat absurd. For the first time I consider the question of remaining, with all the conscious superiority which my knowledge of Jean's secrets would give me—remaining, in fact, for my revenge. A sort of nerveless indecision has got hold of me. The thing is wholly in my hands—the household need not be upset; nothing need be changed in what Goethe's Egmont calls 'the amicable habits of one's life.' And, after all, this life with Jean would be endurable."

For the first time she begins to realize how

wonderfully close, how almost irrefragable are the ties which years of married life can weave ; how all the little incidents and intimacies of the home, the myriad interests that man and wife possess in common, the very sight of one another day after day for years, establish a powerful habit, and constitute a bond almost impossible to break.

" And, therefore, even the association of two beings who are quite indifferent to one another may come to be with the help of time an affectionate and lasting union of two souls united in reality. . . . For it is not the words of the marriage service that constitute the essence of true marriage, nor is it even mutual love, when that exists ; for words are only of the lips, and love may really be the negation of a marriage. A man and a woman are truly married only when they have become, through the influence of their life together, *kindred*, as when two persons are allied by blood. When the wife has become to the husband that sister of whom the Canticle makes mention, then only is the marriage truly consummated. This mystical process lies in a gradual transformation, of which neither of the pair has any consciousness until it has been actually wrought. No matter, then, how the laws may at any future time transform and modify its legal basis, so long as the life together and the community of interests remain, for just so long will marriage, as we understand it now, continue to exist."

Nevertheless, she gets from the detective

bureau facts which show that all her fears are true ; that all her wrongs are very real ; and they include names and dates and information as to places which make all further doubt impossible. But in the meantime something else has come to her. The reminiscent mood that had begun upon the very evening of her terrible discovery returns. In judging her husband and condemning him as false to her, she calls to mind her own past years of life. She knows his secrets ; she has entered into that retreat which he had thought secure against invasion. But has she not herself some carefully secluded *jardin secret* of memory which, could he likewise enter, he would find as eloquent of treachery to him ? The question deeply moves her, and her secret consciousness makes her shrink and shudder at the thought. Can she pronounce a judgment upon him and be herself quite free from condemnation ? She meets the question, at first evasively, and at last unflinchingly. She will summon up her past and judge it just as mercilessly as she judged her husband's.

She goes back to her years of girlhood and its varied incidents. She remembers how her father, a *chef de gare*, had misappropriated money to waste it at the gaming-table and



in other forms of dissipation. She brings to mind his pitiful disgrace, his conviction and imprisonment as a felon, her later years of shabbiness and squalor. She recalls how, after he had died, she had become a sort of governess, and then had met in her employer's family the son of a rich Belgian manufacturer and had loved him. She thinks once more of how she used to meet him secretly, and how these meetings, though quite innocent, were broken off when he was ordered by his parents to end the undesirable entanglement, and how her lover had obeyed because he feared to jeopardize for a woman's sake his hope of fortune. She thinks of how, when she was still tormented by the agony and shame of this rejection, a lady who was interested in her had proposed to bring about her marriage with M. Lecoudrier, whom she had never met, and of whom she knew no more than that he was reported fairly prosperous and of good repute. After a meeting or two she had accepted him, and a *mariage de convenance* had been arranged.

Her mind reverts to her thirteen years of married life. She remembers how, at first, the novelty of her surroundings, the comparative ease of her environment, her pleasure in being mistress of her husband's house and in the

kindness and consideration with which he always treated her, had satisfied her mind and gradually tranquillized her. The birth of a daughter had bound her still more closely to her husband. But there came a time when all these things had palled upon her, when her home and all its duties had become unspeakably monotonous, when even her child had ceased to interest her, and when the prospect of a humdrum life of *bourgeois* dullness had become intolerable. Her old-time restlessness and craving for excitement were again awakened, and their satisfaction took the form of gallantry. She recalls how she began to accept and even seek the notice of those men about her who were young and easily *toqués*. Then came a period of flirtation, of sentimental friendships such as certain types of men and women frequently affect—professedly Platonic *liaisons* in which the vocabulary of friendship is consciously substituted for the language of love, and in which the pressure of hands, the *solitude à deux*, and the *valse significative* play an important part. But as Platonic friendships seldom fill up all the blanks in the *carte tendre* of a woman's life, it was not long before a much more serious affair occurred, when a certain Captain Landouzie became a frequent visitor

in her drawing-room. This person, representing *le type buffle*—forceful, violent, and a good deal of a brute—was the sort of man who always has a singular attraction for women of the sensitive, imaginative, half-neurotic temperament, who seem to find in the presence of a nature so completely physical something that rests their nerves and roughly overrides their finical hesitations. And it was so in this case; for, as she now remembers but too well, in no long time Landouzie had completely dominated Marthe Lecoudrier; and she was saved from taking the final step only by an unexpected incident that called him hastily to join his regiment. A long and serious illness followed; and at its end her period of storm and stress was over. From that time down to the discovery of her husband's secret she had lived contentedly the life that once had seemed quite unendurable.

She thinks of all these episodes, and as she thinks of them she feels that it is not for her to sit in judgment on her husband. She took him in the beginning without asking any questions, just as he took her. If he concealed the physical taint that rested on his race, so had she equally concealed the social taint that her father's crime had fastened on herself. If her

husband came to her with the memory of other loves in mind, so had she come to him distracted by the loss of the only man she ever cared for, and one of whom the recollection still made any thought of marriage with another seem detestable. Her husband had professed no love for her, and she had equally professed no love for him. And after marriage, if she now knew that he had not lived for her alone, her conscience told her that she had not truly lived for him; and that while she had never actually broken any vows as he had done, she still was morally as bad as he, since circumstances, rather than her will, had saved her. Recalling all her past and weighing it against his secret, she hesitates no more. His faults are balanced by her own, and henceforth she will banish both forever from her memory and live with this thought always in her mind, that "from to-day, and only from to-day, I am in very truth a *wife*."

Such is the outline of the story upon which Marcel Prévost has built his latest novel. So far as it possesses any moral, it appears to be intended to assert that every woman of thirty years of age or more who will look carefully into the souvenirs of her past, will find among the fruits of her experience quite enough to

make her charitable in her judgment of the other sex who have temptations such as she is largely shielded from. To this assertion many readers will very naturally demur; and as for M. Prévost's view that every human being, man or woman, has his or her *jardin secret*, this thought is hardly new enough to justify the writing of a novel to expound it; for, indeed, it was set forth by Thackeray many years ago in one of his most striking passages. The interest of the book for M. Prévost's countrymen is, therefore, probably to be found in the skill and subtlety of its literary workmanship and in the innumerable touches that show so rare an understanding of the working of a woman's mind.

But to the American and the English reader this novel has an interest of a very different sort. These will perceive in it not only an entertaining story, a work of literary charm, another lucid and elaborate study of the *ewig Weibliche*; but, more than this, a document containing very valuable evidence as to the physiological and psychic basis of the *mariage de convenance*. Than this there is perhaps no social institution that more deeply interests the Anglo-Saxon student of French manners, as there is none more utterly at variance with

'Anglo-Saxon sentiment and prejudice. To find a keen observer, therefore, like M. Prévost, unconsciously affording us so accurate a demonstration of its practical results, is marvellously interesting ; nor should one pass over this demonstration without at least a general indication of what seems to be its obvious teaching.

The French assert, in explaining and defending their peculiar institution, that in the long run the happiness of marriage depends far more upon material considerations and upon environment than upon an actual affinity of two persons at the time of marriage. Given any conceivable amount of love between the two, this still must wane in time ; and sooner or later the union must rest upon a different basis from that of sentiment alone. Therefore, in the *mariage de convenance*, this basis is most carefully arranged beforehand by the family council, viewing with practical and unromantic eyes the permanent interests of both the principals. It is essential, for example, that they should be of equal, or of nearly equal, social rank ; that there should be no great disparity in age ; that character and temperament should be considered ; and that the united incomes of the two should be sufficient to assure them all

the comforts to which they have been hitherto accustomed, and to guarantee a suitable provision for the presumptive responsibilities of the future. A second proposition which relates to the sentimental side of marriage is accepted as essentially complementary to the first. As love is, in its very last analysis, held to be a purely physical affair, and as it is inspired by mere proximity, its evocation may be safely counted on as an inevitable incident of any properly considered marriage. That is to say, if the young girl be educated in seclusion, so that no attachment for another has come to her before her marriage, the purely emotional side of her nature will at marriage be still a *tabula rasa*, a fair white page, on which her husband may inscribe his name and win the affection which among ill-regulated Teutonic peoples he seeks to do as a preliminary to betrothal. Then, when in course of time the married pair adjust themselves to the relation that is to end at death alone, the wife has no remembrance of any other attachment to impair a single-minded interest in her husband; and with a comfortable environment and an assured provision, both go through life's long journey hand-in-hand, unvexed by unforeseen anxieties, serene and confident, and with that complete tran-

quillity which is the most secure of all foundations for mutual affection and esteem. The scheme is beautifully logical ; it possesses the lucidity, completeness, and simplicity that are so characteristic of all French theory ; it is based upon that intensely material view of life which in France has come to be a national possession ; and it has about it something of the impenetrable hardness which, with all their superficial sentiment, remains the one eternally and profoundly significant trait that underlies French character.

But the Anglo-Saxon, who is never infatuated with any theory whatever merely because it is logical and lucid, and who has a most uncomfortable way of looking at its practical application, entertains some definite objections to this view of marriage ; and two of these may be restated here, because this book of M. Prévost seems to shed some light upon the questions they involve. Assuming (which is a good deal to assume) that these businesslike and scientific marriages are really so extremely well arranged that women are never sacrificed to brutes, and that men are never tricked into a union with women whom they would not think of choosing for themselves, what is the actual relation of all these arrangements to the wom-



an's happiness? When a young and innocent girl, brought up in a conventual seclusion, is handed over to a man whom she has scarcely ever seen and for whom she can have no particular prepossession, what, one may ask, are probably her feelings? It may be true, as Mr. Howells very delicately puts it, that man is still imperfectly monogamous; but it is also true that woman is essentially monandrous; and this implies the right of choice, since it is a negation of the masculine promiscuity. Does she then, in fact, so very readily adjust herself to a situation which to her is quite unique? Does she not, when roughly thrust into the intimacy of married life, feel a revolt so strong as to make her husband more or less an object of repulsion to her? This very natural inquiry gets a sort of answer from M. Prévost. I give his dictum in the very words that he has placed in the mouth of Marthe Lecoudrier:

“Comment font toutes les autres, qui n'ont même pas cette aide, petites bourgeoises quelconques que l'on marie comme on m'a mariée? Passent-elles outre les répugnances, grâce à leur naturelle inertie, à une vague et bestiale curiosité, ou simplement au désir niais d'avoir un ménage, d'être 'Madame'? Au fond, je crois que chez beaucoup de jeunes filles la peur de l'homme inconnu n'est pas telle que le bruit en court,

et que se l'imagine le petit nombre de celles que résident au sommet de l'échelle des êtres sensitifs. Beaucoup de jeunes filles n'ont aucune vraie pudeur. La pudeur leur est apprise, suggérée, comme un principe de sage économie générale : à savoir, qu'une femme perd un avantage à se donner. Mais elles n'éprouvent nulle gêne à s'étendre à côté d'un homme, du moment que la perte est régulièrement compensée, que l'usage social est respecté, qu'elles-mêmes sont sûres de faire 'comme tout le monde.' . . . Oui, il faut l'avouer ! ces pauvres raisons suffisent à l'immense majorité des jeunes épouses ! On fait 'comme tout le monde,' dans une circonstance où la vraie noblesse d'âme commanderait de faire comme soi-même, comme soi seul."

This surely is a very cynical defence, for it resolves itself into an expansion of the famous line of Pope that "every woman is at heart a rake," a saying which, by the way, was not original with Pope, but was drawn by him from a quite Gallic epigram of Jehan de Meung. Yet M. Prévost thoroughly believes in it ; for in this very novel his account of the early days of the Lecoudriers' *lune de miel* is but a concrete illustration of the same idea, recalling an extremely curious passage in Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, where that adventurous young woman in her male disguise spends the first night of her freedom in a rustic inn. The Anglo-Saxon, with his great-

er reverence for women, will not find such an apologia conclusive.

But something far more subtle and more vitally important still remains. M. Prévost depicts his heroine when, by the accepted theory of the *mariage de convenance*, she should have reached the period of tranquillity, as a true *bourgeoise soumise*, suddenly becoming restless, bored, *ennuyée*, eager for excitement, and ready to seek it elsewhere than at home. Why is this so? It seems to vitiate the principle laid down by all the social philosophers who defend the view of marriage which prevails in France. M. Prévost explains it by a reference to what he styles *la crise*. Again I give his very words :

"Il y a un moment où une femme qui jusque-là a été satisfaite par le mariage, arrive à souhaiter autre chose. . . . Quand le régime conjugal est enfin établi, quand l'accoutumance est complète, aussitôt l'épouse sent que ce trouble délicieux, ce trouble antérieur lui manque. Regret du passé chez l'honnête femme, désir de l'aventure chez les autres ; combien éprouvent le besoin d'un *nouveau mariage*, où tout ce qu'il y eut d'exquis dans la première initiation se recommence!"

These very frank statements will seem to the Anglo-Saxon reader an unconscious condem-

nation of the whole theory of marriage which prevails in France, and to support by implication the Teutonic view. For the Teutonic view assumes that the love on which alone a happy marriage can be based, so far from being allied solely with the senses, is a far more spiritual thing—an exaltation arising, first of all, from certain psychical affinities between two persons whose temperament exactly fits them for each other. It has in it, on the one side, an element of maternal affection, and on the other something of the self-devotion and disinterestedness involved in ties of blood relationship. It cannot be called forth indifferently by one person as well as by another, but must spring from an instinctive recognition of the subtle fitness of two natures for each other; and it is based, therefore, upon that principle of selection which is one of the most profound and universal of all natural laws. When, moreover, it is thus evoked, it so completely moulds and masters every faculty of mind and body as to preclude the possibility of any other similar and coexistent sentiment. In its fullest and most perfect evocation it appears but once in any human life; and that it should be thus permitted to appear is both a physiological and a psychological necessity.

The nature that through special circumstances has never known it has been cheated of its rights; and the whole being, whether consciously or unconsciously, will sooner or later rise up in revolt. Thus, as M. Huysmans in *En Route* declares (and I have heard the statement vouched for by very eminent ecclesiastics of the Catholic Church), even in the cloister there comes a time in the life of the most devoted *religieuse* when she finds with dismay that her existence is becoming quite intolerable, when her best-loved duties fail to interest her, and when a mysterious lassitude creeps over mind and body. She, in her innocence and inexperience, does not understand its meaning, but her superiors do. They know it to be the *crise*, the mighty instinct of womanhood crying out within her, and they dread the outcome; for with many nuns it assumes the form of physical decline and ends in early death.

Now, in the *mariage de convenance*, which takes into account the physiological phase alone, and disregards a very vital psychic truth, the *crise* still lingers in the background to be reckoned with hereafter. It has not necessarily been coincident with marriage, but it may still occur at any time to overturn the scientifically accurate arrangements of the *con-*

*seil de famille* and to provide the writers of French fiction with the particular sort of incident which forms the staple of their literary studies. In the Teutonic marriage, on the other hand, the *crise* is not a factor in the later matrimonial problem, for it has been synchronous with the marriage rite. Nature, which is mightier than Art, has had her due; and henceforth there exists in the mind of the wife no lingering dissatisfaction, no vaguely curious yearning after what M. Prévost calls *l'homme providentiel*. The basis for a lasting sympathy has been securely laid; and man and wife live out their days together, bound fast by ties that do not gall, and that are infinitely stronger than those imposed in selfish bargaining and nice consideration of the *dot*—by ties, in fact, which will survive external shock, and which adversity itself will only knit more closely in bringing out through sacrifice of self the pure devotion and eternal tenderness that blend two hearts in one and constitute the sacramental mystery of marriage.

GEORGE MOORE





## GEORGE MOORE

A YEAR or two ago M. Émile Zola made a sort of pilgrimage to London, and was there received with the overwhelming and indiscriminate attention which the English always give to the latest lion, whether he be a great benefactor of the human race or a King of the Cannibal Islands. Foremost among the throng that hastened to welcome the distinguished exponent of naturalism was observed a learned judge who, only a short time before, had sent a publisher to prison for issuing an English version of one of M. Zola's works; and this circumstance was very naturally taken as a text by the Continental press for sermons anent the hypocrisy and insincerity of the British nation. A perusal of the books produced of late by Mr. George Moore gives rise to somewhat similar reflections.

Ten years ago, Mr. Moore's first great success, *A Mummer's Wife*, was the talk of literary London, and was sending thrills of horror

down the spines of the Philistines. It was cast out of Mudie's as unfit for any one's perusal. The fiat of Mr. W. H. Smith excluded it from all the news-stalls. Mr. Moore was banned and badgered by the unco' guid, and even by many who made no special claim to virtue. To-day he is spoken of with marked respect as a bold, original, and powerful writer whose work deserves most serious study; and, in fact, his latest volumes come, not from the ill-starred press that first exploited him, nor from the neutral house that afterwards accepted books of his; but they show upon the title-page an imprint that bears with it not only respectability, but distinction.

Yet Mr. Moore himself has undergone no change in any way since the time when he was so bitterly denounced; nor has his theory of art been changed. He is quite as pessimistic as he ever was. His plots reek quite as strongly as they ever did of adultery, and drink, and despair. Why is he now *persona grata* to the publishers, and the libraries, and the critics? The fact is, that the treatment accorded to M. Zola and Mr. Vizetelly, and to the George Moore of ten years ago, and that which this same novelist receives to-day, are not in reality symptomatic of British hypocrisy, but rather

of British inconsistency, an inconsistency that comes from jumbling together two utterly irreconcilable motives—the artistic motive and the motive of morality. At one time the latter gets control, and Mr. Moore is damned; at another the artistic sentiment is in the ascendant, and he is set upon a throne in a sort of apotheosis. Now, as a matter of fact, either point of view is quite defensible. It hardly admits of question that *A Mummer's Wife* and *Mike Fletcher*—yes, and *Esther Waters* and *Celibates*—are very far from being the sort of reading that one would recommend *virginibus puerisque*. Personally, I do not think their tendency to be immoral, but the contrary, because they paint vice in such ghastly colors; yet the knowledge of vice which they display is hardly edifying. On the other hand, it is quite as fair to judge them wholly on their literary merits, and thus to speak of them in the very warmest terms of praise. In England, however, the motive of morality is forever clashing with the purely artistic instinct, thus leading in practice to the paradoxical result described above.

Mr. Moore is unique among English writers of to-day. An Irishman by birth, he received his training in Paris, where he lived so long as

almost to lose the idiomatic command of his mother-tongue, a fact recorded by himself in his interesting *Confessions of a Young Man*; and his first novel, a story of Ireland under the Land League, was actually written and published in French. Returning to England, however, he recovered his use of literary English, and after a series of somewhat desultory experiments, began to contribute regularly to the pages of those ephemeral publications that are seldom seen outside of London, and that in London find their limited circulation within the borders of literary and artistic Bohemia. Mr. Moore wrote much and often—dramatic criticisms, art criticism, literary criticism—developing a style and an intellectual purpose that have become very distinctive in his later and more ambitious work. He put forth also several fugitive attempts at fiction, until at last he gave to the world a novel which still remains the best known as well as the most striking thing that he has done.

*A Mummer's Wife* narrates the story of a woman of the lower middle class, one reared in the strictest, narrowest fashion known to the English of the provincial towns, but one whose temperament is crossed by sensuous impulses that lie dormant in her early life, be-

cause nothing has occurred as yet to waken them. So she lives on with her feeble, asthmatic husband, keeping his shop for him and eking out their income by her needle. She is a woman of much physical attractiveness, and when, one day, the manager of a travelling dramatic troupe becomes a lodger in the house, he immediately lays siege to her, and with ultimate success; so that she leaves her husband for her lover and with him enters on a life whose novel freedom and tawdry Bohemianism fascinate her, especially when she finally becomes herself a player and enters fully into the nomadic, happy-go-lucky, lawless existence of her new companions. The story that follows is a curious study of the general deterioration of her character—of a pathetic and unceasing struggle between the enduring constraint of heredity and of her early training, and the powerful influences with which her new environment appeals to those subtly interwoven traits that thrill her whole being in answer to their urgings. She is *une âme désorientée*, distracted, unbalanced; and the exposition of the process by which she slowly sinks to the very lowest depths of degradation is powerful, and pitiless, and searching. With one exception Mr. Moore has never done

such perfect character-drawing as in this book, which contains a dozen men and women who are marvellously realized. Dick Lennox, the actor-lover, fat, vulgar, "sensual as a mutton-chop," absolutely devoid of sentiment, yet absolutely honest, and good-natured to the verge of weakness, is a remarkable study, and so is Kate herself in every stage of her career, from the first pages of the book, where we find her primly waiting in the shop, to the crisis, where at the death of her infant she takes to drink, and at the end, where she is wallowing in the gutters, wrecked in hope, enfeebled in intellect, and lost to shame. Intensely vivid is the minutely curious picture of the life of the strolling players, their intrigues, their quarrels, their shady, shifty, hand-to-mouth devices, their conceit, their comradeship, their paltry triumphs, and their squalid troubles. No less remarkable is the carefully drawn study of the development of the drink-habit in a woman who fights against it and endeavors to conceal its progress with all the subtlety of deceit of which the drunkard and the opium-eater alone are capable.

The vogue of *A Mummer's Wife*, which, thanks partly to the advertising given it by those who tried to secure its practical sup-

pression, passed to its fourteenth edition in the first year of its publication, won for Mr. Moore's succeeding novels an instant hearing. And they well deserved it; for, in spite of many and obvious defects and inequalities, they were original and strong, and they represented besides a particular literary *genre* that had had as yet no representative in English. Of these further works *A Modern Lover* is a novel of the world of art, its central figure being one of those effeminate, corrupt, deceitful natures so frequently found in men who follow the artistic career, and who for some not very obvious reason exercise a curious fascination upon women. Seymour, the artist in question, is wholly base, yet through his power over women, whom he systematically uses and deceives, he makes his way successfully from poverty to social and professional success. *Vain Fortune*, the least interesting of anything that Mr. Moore has done, is a study of feminine jealousy, skilfully conceived and firmly drawn, but rather slight and lacking in perspective. *A Drama in Muslin* was written as an attempt to draw the modern girl as shown in three distinct and different types, so that in this book men play no very important part; but as a study in temperament the attempt

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is scarcely a success. One gets an impression of nothing very characteristic, and certainly of nothing that may be taken as being really typical. Yet in another way the book is one of some importance. The scene is laid in Ireland, and the life depicted is that of the "Castle set"—the half-impoverished gentry and those who wish to be considered as among the gentry. To the future social historian of Britain this novel may well prove an interesting document; for Mr. Moore knows his ground most thoroughly, and he has caught to perfection the squalid, frowzy setting and the scarcely subdued vulgarity of that moribund society which in another generation will be happily extinct.

As *A Drama in Muslin* was written to describe the typical young woman, *Mike Fletcher*—a novel, by the way, whose title is said to have very materially hurt its sale—embodies Mr. Moore's conception of the men who are typical of our time. One would be very sorry, however, to accept the personages of this book as being any but sporadic specimens. At the most they can only typify the London "bounder" in several of his most unpleasant phases; nor have they any real importance to readers whose lives are lived a hundred miles



from Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus and the Strand. They are all more or less young, they are chiefly bachelors living in chambers in the Temple, or in contiguous lodgings. Some of them are journalists and some are artists and some are merely men-about-town; but all of them alike devote their days and nights to wine and women and riot and brawling, with intervals of erotic verse-writing, and rather incoherent philosophical discussions punctuated with stupid jokes and ribald stories. Mike Fletcher himself, the unsavory hero of the book, who is described in its pages by one of his admirers as a "toff," is a thorough-going cad, the son of an Irish peasant, who gets on after a fashion by a combination of impudence and subserviency, and whose success with women of every class is as great as that of Seymour in *A Modern Lover*. But Mike Fletcher, after inheriting a fortune from one of these impressionable beings and after having exhausted every possible form of what he views as pleasure, is haunted by a *Weltschmerz* so profound and so unconquerable that in the end he takes his own life after a most ghastly scene of hopeless, horrifying self-communion. The book is in a way a powerful one, and some of its episodes are

very striking; but in writing it Mr. Moore did not have all of his material quite thoroughly in hand. The story is not compact, but is too often vague; and he resorts now and then to improbabilities, as when he makes Mike Fletcher rush off to the desert in a moment of boredom and become the chosen friend of an Arab chief among the Bedâwin—an episode that is most incongruous and *bizarre*. There is another special criticism to be made. In nearly every book that he has written the author is very free with casual allusions to persons and things that presuppose a knowledge on the reader's part of all his other books; but in *Mike Fletcher* he refers to incidents which even to one who remembers every line that he has written are wholly unintelligible; so that more than once a particularly exasperating vagueness settles down upon the mind to befog the interest and destroy the continuity of the story.

*Esther Waters* was the first novel of Mr. Moore's to be reprinted in the United States, and it is still the only one by which in this country he is generally known. It is inferior to *A Mummer's Wife*, and, as a whole, to *A Modern Lover* and *Mike Fletcher*; but the first half of it contains some of the very best of all

its author's work. It tells the story of an English servant-maid, and it is written as a human document illustrative of the life, the ethics, and the average experiences of the class to which Esther herself belongs. Esther Waters goes out to service in the family of a country gentleman; she is betrayed by one of the grooms, is turned out of her place, and is thrown upon her own resources. The portions of the book which tell of her life immediately before the birth of her child, of her hospital experiences, and of the struggle for a livelihood that follows, are very powerfully written. Mr. Moore succeeds here, as he has nowhere else so perfectly succeeded, in touching the sources of sympathy and of pity. One reads these pages with an emotion that is almost irresistible, and that is the very strongest tribute to their author's grasp on life. But after that point in the story is reached where Esther's groom returns and marries her, and they settle down to the keeping of a "pub," and, on the husband's part, to the experiences of a typical British book-maker, the intensity of the interest wanes rapidly. The novel then becomes too obviously a *Tendenzroman*, after the fashion of Zola's *L'Argent*, and is in its too apparent purpose almost a tract against the universal

British vice of betting. The low life which Mr. Moore here depicts is given with extraordinary accuracy of detail, and the picture is of much sociological interest, but it is always borne in upon the reader that the facts have been "got up" for the occasion, and, unlike M. Zola in his similar performances, Mr. Moore has not the heat and glow of a great creative imagination to fuse his raw material into a dramatically satisfying whole.

A book of his called *Celibates*, which appeared in 1895, contains three stories, two of them very short and comparatively unimportant, though striking and original; but the third, which is almost long enough to be called a novel, is a very memorable piece of work. I think it not only the most remarkable thing that Mr. Moore has ever done, but as a piece of minute observation and psychological analysis, one of the most extraordinary things in all modern literature. It is entitled *Mildred Lawson*, and, summarized briefly, is the story of a young Englishwoman reared among commonplace and comfortable surroundings, but filled with a belief that life has some higher mission for her than house-keeping and the bearing of children. Having some money of her own, she takes up painting, studies in London, hires

an apartment in Paris, becomes a Bohemian of the extreme type, and flits about in a society that is frankly beyond the pale of decency. Yet because of her own coldness of temperament and her perpetual thought of self, she remains physically pure, and we leave her tossing about upon her bed with the cry, "Give me a passion for God or man, but give me a passion! I cannot live without one!"

There is probably no living writer in any language who could have drawn this curiously subtle character as Mr. Moore has drawn it, with a feeling for the most evanescent *nuances* of temperament and a knowledge of certain phases and types that is absolutely marvellous. This story, in fact, should properly rank its author with the greatest masters of fiction—with Stendhal and Balzac and Flaubert and Thackeray; yet it will not do so, and for a very obvious reason. When one thinks of it, why does it happen that the epoch-making novelists just named have not only won an enduring artistic success, but what may be called a popular success as well, so that their names and their works alike are familiar to all cultivated men and women? It is not merely because of their genius and their profound knowledge of life, their subtlety and the perfection of their

literary methods. It is first of all because they have exercised these gifts and qualities in a field that is familiar to all who read. The types they draw are, in general, the types that the most casual person can recognize and judge. Every man of the world has, in his own experience, met Major Pendennis and Costigan and Colonel Newcome. Becky Sharp has flitted across the life of every one who lives in the greater world. The tragedy of *Père Goriot* is enacted daily before the eyes of all of us. Every provincial town contains an *Emma Bovary*. Therefore, when these and others of their general ubiquity appear in the pages of a master, the perfect truth of the portraiture is at once perceived by all, and the achievement is hailed with universal pleasure and applause. But in drawing *Mildred Lawson*, Mr. Moore has deliberately fixed upon a type which is not a common one as yet, though it will grow commoner, I think, as society develops on its present lines. It is a type that even men of wide experience may not have happened to encounter; and so, in reading this most subtle study, they may view it as a pure invention of the novelist, wonderfully consistent and impressive to be sure, but one that does not quite belong to actual life. They will

style it an abstraction, a mere personification of certain intellectual and moral qualities, the work of a literary Frankenstein, curious and masterly, but on the whole unreal. And this is the penalty which Mr. Moore must pay for his daring and for his devotion to what he feels to be the truth; for the type does actually exist, and with those who know it, its complexity and its psychological abnormality, which partly elude and partly appall the analyst, can only heighten the unqualified amazement that is the one appropriate tribute to Mr. Moore's almost incredible success.

The rarity of the type drawn in Mildred Lawson is due to the fact that she combines so many different qualities, as to become a complex and not even a fairly simple character. One sees in these days many women who are at war with their environment and galled by conventionality, who have educated themselves beyond the control of every-day principles of conduct, and who are bent upon "living their own life," as the slang of the hour describes it. One sees many women, also, of great cleverness and imagination and subtlety; and of course one meets women of beauty and fascination and refinement. Nor is there any dearth of women who are introspective and

self-analytical to the point of morbidity, and who in consequence are selfish in the intellectual as well as in the moral sense of that comprehensive word. But what one very seldom sees is a woman who combines all of these qualities and attributes—who is beautiful, accomplished, and fascinating, imaginative and intellectual, absolutely unfettered by the traditional limitations that have their root in centuries of social conventions, and yet so self-centred and acutely conscious of self as to find in this one trait the check upon conduct as well as upon achievement which in others of her sex arises from the thought of extraneous opinion. Now Mildred Lawson is the embodiment of all these characteristics; and to one who knows her type in life, the study that Mr. Moore has given of her is, down to its very last and subtlest tint, a masterpiece.

At the time when his book first appeared I said, in writing of the character of Mildred Lawson, that it suggests a blend of Becky Sharp and Blanche Amory; but such a generalization is altogether crude and superficial. Beside Mildred Lawson, Becky Sharp is commonplace, and Blanche Amory is a bit of rather vulgar affectation. Mildred Lawson's dominant traits are curiosity and imagination. She



wishes to know every phase of life, to experience everything, to feel every passion, every emotion. Her imaginative mind shows her in anticipation wonderful things—the pleasure that comes from novelty, from achievement, from love, from passion. She figures it all to herself beforehand and thrills at the promise of it all. But the very intensity of the anticipation makes the reality when it approaches seem poor; it is, after all, not what she hoped for, and she draws back from it with a kind of shrinking distaste. She has divined what ought to be the emotion for each phase of experience, and at the critical moment she falls to analyzing the emotion until it vanishes and she is disillusioned. It is the cult of self, and it brings with it a fatal slavery. Even when tragedy enters into her immediate life she cannot suffer; she can only wonder why she does not feel what she knows she ought to feel. There is a conflict of thought and motive at every moment. A young artist who had loved her, and for whom she had felt a sort of patronizing fondness, sends for her as he is dying:

“A close observer might have noticed that the expression on Mildred’s face changed a little. ‘He is dying for me,’ she thought. And, as in a ray of sun-

light, she basked for a moment in a little glow of self-satisfaction. Then almost angrily she defended herself against herself. She was not responsible for so casual a thought; the greatest saint might be a victim of a wandering thought. She was, of course, glad that he liked her, but she was sorry that she caused him suffering. He must have suffered. Men will sacrifice anything to their passions. . . . They had had very pleasant times together—in this very gallery. . . . Suddenly her thoughts became clear and she heard these words as if they had been read to her: 'Lots of men have killed themselves for women, but to die of a broken heart proves a great deal more. Few women have inspired such a love as that.'

When her own brother dies she is overcome with a desire to weep, but she first carefully takes off her gown lest she should spoil it in abandoning herself to grief. Then she wonders whether that was really her reason, after all. Her love affairs were quite as fully mingled with doubts and shrinkings and hesitations. She has no principle; the question of morality does not enter her mind. She is longing for the thrill of passion. It will be a new experience. She is ready for it. So at Barbizon, where she goes to paint, she meets in that beautiful spot, amid the scent of flowers and the dewy dusk of the great forest, an English painter—a frank sensualist, a man of physical

charm and with the added attractions of talent and fame. They roam the forest together. She thinks of how she longs for him. She would like to take him in her arms and kiss him. When they reach the very heart of the dim forest, with its endless billows of dark-green foliage and its mysterious murmurings instinct with nature, she wonders whether he will kiss her, whether he will take her hand and tell her how he loves her. But he does not understand her, though he partly divines her thought. Her curious uncertainty, that stifles desire at the very moment when promise approaches fulfilment, makes her manner half-repellent. Yet the two go on together with a curious frankness. They discuss Morton's former mistresses; they stick at nothing in word and phrase—but Mildred still shrinks from the critical step. She cannot feel the self-abandonment, the sublime unconsciousness that marks the triumph of love. And so the story is unfolded. She longs to do something really great, but her talent is not adequate for that, and she cares for nothing that is less than great. She longs for love, but her heart is cold and her emotions dulled. She fascinates others; she is brilliant, good-natured in a way, with that careless good-nature which is often

the very refinement of cruelty in that it is at bottom quite indifferent ; and she dissects and vivisects herself at every turn until she gets at last a horrible understanding of her own real nature.

"Self had been her ruin ; she had never been able to get away from self ; no, not for a single moment of her life. All her love-stories had been ruined and disfigured by self-assertion—not a great, unconscious self, in other words, an instinct, but an extremely conscious, irritable, mean, and unworthy self. She knew it all ; she was not deceived. She could no more cheat herself than she could change herself ; that wretched self was as present in her at this moment as it had ever been, and knowledge of her fault helped her nothing in its correction. She could not change herself ; she would have to bear the burden of herself to the end."

The picture is astonishing ; and one despairs in attempting to convey to those who have not read the book even a faint conception of the startling power of analysis which it everywhere displays.

It has been said above that Mr. Moore has given to English literature an entirely new *genre*, and this is true ; for though, after he returned to England, he won back his English style, he has never separated himself from the

French school of literary art in which he received his earliest training; and he is to-day to be grouped, not with Hardy and Hope and Besant, but with far greater artists than even the first of these—with Guy de Maupassant and Zola and J. K. Huysmans. He is, in fact, the only writer of English who exemplifies the whole manner and spirit of the Realists. In everything but his language he is French, and not only French but Parisian. His models, his standards, his whole technique he finds among the writers of France; and one is not surprised on learning that it was he who first made known to the English the works of Verlaine and Rimbaud and Jules Laforgue. There is not a single one of his longer novels that is not demonstrably inspired or sensibly influenced by some great French masterpiece. The seduction of Kate Lennox, in *A Munmer's Wife*, and her gradual degradation through drink, must be regarded as a reminiscence of the story of Gervaise in *L'Assommoir*. Mike Fletcher, who takes money from women and rises by their favor from back-alley journalism to fortune, is only an English (or Irish) replica of Georges Duroy in *Bel-Ami*. The story of *Esther Waters* is an evident borrowing from the Goncourts' *Germinie Lacerteux*, with

a greater minuteness of obstetrical description. In fact, while Mr. Moore is not a copyist, he is so saturated with the theories of the Realistic School as to make it impossible for him to avoid the reproduction of their themes.

Nor is it merely in his themes that he recalls his Gallic masters. The pessimism of his writings makes him still more closely kin to them; and for this his Celtic origin is undoubtedly responsible, since the pessimism of the Celt is something to which the Anglo-Saxon can never by any possibility attain. The Celt, whether he be Irish or French, is always a creature of extremes. Light-hearted with a delightful joyousness and frivolity, he is, in his other mood, hopeless with an abysmal misery. The Anglo-Saxon, on the other hand, though he takes his pleasure sadly, takes his sorrow hopefully, and has an element of sturdy resistance in his nature that defies destiny and smites the inevitable in the face. The gloom of the Anglo-Saxon is a melancholy half-light; the gloom of the Celt is the blackness that presses on the eye-balls like a physical weight, and plunges the very soul into infinite despair. Mr. Hardy, for instance, gives us a fine expression of Anglo-Saxon pessimism. Things are often ordered for the very worst in this world; but he accepts

the worst, and can still perceive the humor that forever gleams amid the irony of fate. But the pessimism of a Maupassant is a grim, intense, and all-including monotony of horror that taints and corrodes like a mordant acid. And so nothing in all literature is more hideous than the last twenty pages of *Mike Fletcher*, after reading which one feels for the moment that life itself is a loathsome thing, pregnant with shame and nameless evil.

How purely French is Mr. Moore's literary method can perhaps best be seen in what he has written as a critic of literature and art. To the general reading public his most important book of criticism is the one which in form is nearest akin to the conventional volume of essays, such as American and English writers put forth from time to time. Yet it is not in *Impressions and Opinions* that one finds the true George Moore, but in a curious and fascinating little volume entitled *The Confessions of a Young Man*, put forth several years ago, and reprinted in this country, where it slowly passed into a second edition. This book, which is unique in English literature, is nominally the autobiography of one Edward Dayne; but it may very fairly be regarded as containing a suggestion, and something more than a suggest-

ion, of the facts of Mr. Moore's own personal history. The thread of story, however, is a very slight one, and is broken and intercalated with disconnected and apparently irrelevant paragraphs that touch upon the most diverse questions of art, literature, and morals. Thus, *à propos* of nothing in particular, the author will drop the narrative of Dayne's financial troubles, or of his *vie de Bohème*, to express a terse judgment on the Symbolists, or on the impossibility of marriage among enlightened persons, or on the artistic value of the music-hall, or on the respective merits of the eighteenth-century tavern and the nineteenth-century club; or he will pause to discourse with curious psychological subtlety on *la femme de trente ans*, and then suddenly slip back into the narration that he has temporarily put aside. The lack of form in all this is, to a conventionally Anglo-Saxon reader, exasperating and eccentric; to others it is simply piquant; but in reality it is part of a perfectly consistent design in that it gives us a picture of mentality, of an intellectual and æsthetic condition, and thus fits in perfectly with the synchronous picture of a human life. In this, moreover, Mr. Moore is not violating literary precedent—he is following it; only the model



that he has before him is French, not English. It is as old as Jean Paul; it is as new as Maurice Barrès; and, in fact, it is probably the curious *Ennemi des Lois* of Barrès that Mr. Moore is consciously imitating in his plan, although he does not specifically mention that odd and brilliant writer. And the opinions themselves are strikingly original—audacious, independent, perverse, absolutely un-English, wholly French. Take this, for example:

“I am sick of synthetical art; we want observation direct and unreasoned. What I reproach Millet with is that it is always the same thing, the same peasant, the same *sabot*, the same sentiment. You must admit that it is somewhat stereotyped. What does this matter? What is more stereotyped than Japanese art? But that does not prevent it from being always beautiful.”

This is thinking aloud. Then take the following:

“How to be happy!—not to read Baudelaire and Verlaine, not to enter the ‘Nouvelle Athènes,’ unless perhaps to play dominos like the *bourgeois* over there, not to do anything that would awake a too intense consciousness of life—to live in a sleepy country-side, to have a garden to work in, to have a wife and children, to chatter quietly every evening over the details of existence. We must have the azaleas

out to-morrow and thoroughly cleansed, they are devoured by insects; the tame rook has flown away; mother lost her prayer-book coming from church; she thinks it was stolen. A good, honest, well-to-do peasant, who knows nothing of politics, must be very nearly happy—and to think there are people who would educate, who would draw these people out of the calm satisfaction of their instincts and give them passions. The philanthropist is the Nero of modern times."

Here is a bit of personal feeling that is as French as though written by a Frenchman :

"The years the most impressionable, from twenty to thirty, when the senses and the mind are the widest awake, I, the most impressionable of human beings, had spent in France, not among English residents, but among that which is the quintessence of the nation; I, not an indifferent spectator, but an enthusiast, striving heart and soul to identify himself with his environment, to shake himself free from race and language, and to recreate himself, as it were, in the womb of a new nationality, assuming its ideals, its morals, and its modes of thought; and I had succeeded strangely well, and when I returned home England was a new country to me; I had, as it were, forgotten everything. Every aspect of street and suburban garden was new to me; of the manner of life of Londoners I knew nothing. This sounds incredible; but it is so. I saw, but I could realize nothing. I went into a drawing-room, but everything seemed far away—a dream, a presentment, nothing more; I was in touch

with nothing; of the thoughts and feelings of those I met I could understand nothing, nor could I sympathize with them; an Englishman was at that time as much out of my mental reach as an Esquimau would be now. Women were nearer to me than men, and I will take this opportunity to note my observation, for I am not aware that any one else has observed that the difference between the two races is found in the men, not in the women. French and English women are psychologically very similar; the standpoint from which they see life is the same, the same thoughts interest and amuse them; but the attitude of a Frenchman's mind is absolutely opposed to that of an Englishman; they stand on either side of a vast abyss, two animals different in color, form, and temperament—two ideas destined to remain irrevocably separate and distinct."

Mr. Moore has something to say of contemporary English literature. Here are some rather curious bits. The first has to do with Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson.

"I will state frankly that Mr. R. L. Stevenson never wrote a line that failed to delight me; but he never wrote a book. . . . I think of Mr. Stevenson as a consumptive youth weaving garlands of sad flowers with pale, weak hands, or leaning to a large plate-glass window and scratching thereon exquisite profiles with a diamond pencil. . . . I do not care to speak of great ideas, for I am unable to see how an idea can exist, at all events can be great, out of language; an allusion to Mr. Stevenson's verbal expression will perhaps

make my meaning clear. His periods are fresh and bright, rhythmical in sound, and perfect realizations of their sense; in reading you often think that never before was such definiteness united to such poetry of expression; every page and every sentence rings of its individuality. Mr. Stevenson's style is over-smart—well dressed, shall I say?—like a young man walking in the Burlington Arcade. Yes, I will say so; but, I will add, the most gentlemanly young man that ever walked on the Burlington. Mr. Stevenson is competent to understand any thought that might be presented to him; but if he were to use it, it would instantly become neat, sharp, ornamental, light, and graceful; and it would lose all its original richness and harmony. It is not Mr. Stevenson's brain that prevents him from being a thinker, but his style."

And this is what he has to say of Mr. George Meredith:

" 'When we have translated half of Mr. Meredith's utterances into possible human speech, then we can enjoy him,' says the *Pall Mall Gazette*. We take our pleasures differently; mine are spontaneous, and I know nothing about translating the rank smell of a nettle into the fragrance of a rose, and than enjoying it.

"Mr. Meredith's conception of life is crooked, ill-balanced, and out of tune. What remains? A certain lustiness. You have seen a big man with square shoulders and a small head pushing about in a crowd; he shouts and works his arms; he seems to be doing a great deal; in reality, he is doing nothing. So Mr.

Meredith appears to me, and yet I can only think of him as an artist. His habit is not slatternly, like those of such literary hodmen as Mr. David Christie Murray, Mr. Besant, Mr. Buchanan. There is no trace of the crowd about him. I do not question his right of place. I am out of sympathy with him—that is all; and I regret that it should be so, for he is one whose love of art is pure and untainted with commercialism; and if I may praise it for naught else, I can praise it for this."

What he says of Mr. Hardy is particularly interesting, for it shows what I have always said, that, with all Mr. Hardy's pessimism and with all his frankness on certain social questions, he is still essentially Anglo-Saxon, and is therefore, from the French point of view, likely to be misjudged and misunderstood.

"His work is what dramatic critics would call good, honest, straightforward work. It is unilluminated by a ray of genius; it is slow and somewhat sodden. It reminds me of an excellent family coach—one of the old sort—hung on C-springs, a fat coachman on the box, and a footman whose livery was made for his predecessor. In criticising Mr. Meredith I was out of sympathy with my author, ill at ease, angry, puzzled; but with Mr. Hardy I am on quite different terms. I am as familiar with him as with the old pair of trousers I put on when I sit down to write. I know all about his aims, his methods. I know what has been done in that line, and what can be done."

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The following dictum is not wholly, perhaps, unfair to Mr. Henry James, but it is decidedly unjust to Mr. Howells:

"What Mr. James wants to do is what he does. I will admit that an artist may be great and limited; by one word he may light up an abyss of soul; but there must be this one magical and unique word. Shakespeare gives us the word; Balzac sometimes, after pages of vain striving, gives us the word; Tourguénieff gives it with miraculous certainty; but Henry James, no. A hundred times he flutters about it; his whole book is one long flutter near to the one magical and unique word, but the word is not spoken; and for want of the word his characters are never resolved out of the haze or nebulæ. You are on a bowing acquaintance with them. They pass you in the street, they stop and speak to you; you know how they are dressed; you watch the color of their eyes. . . . I have seen a good many people I knew. I have observed an attitude and an earnestness of manner that proved that a heart was beating. . . . I have read nothing of Henry James's that did not suggest the manner of a scholar. But why should a scholar limit himself to empty and endless sentimentalities? I will not taunt him with any of the old taunts. Why does he not write complicated stories? Why does he not complete his stories? Let all this be waived. I will ask him only why he always avoids decisive action? Why does a woman never say 'I will'? Why does a woman never leave the house with her lover? Why does a man never kill a man? Why does a man never kill

himself? Why is nothing ever accomplished? In real life, murder, adultery, and suicide are of common occurrence; but Mr. James's people live in a calm, sad, and very polite twilight volition. Suicide or adultery has happened before the story begins; suicide or adultery happens some years hence, when the characters have left the stage; but bang in front of the reader nothing happens. . . . In connection with Henry James I had often heard the name of W. D. Howells. I bought some three or four of his novels. I found them pretty, very pretty, but nothing more—a sort of Ashby Sterry done into very neat prose. He is vulgar, is refined as Henry James; he is more domestic; girls with white dresses and virginal looks, languid mammas, mild witticisms, here, there, and everywhere; a couple of young men, one a little cynical, the other a little overshadowed by his love; a strong, bearded man of fifty in the background; in a word, a Tom Robertson comedy faintly spiced with American. Henry James went to France and read Tourguénieff. W. D. Howells stayed at home and read Henry James."

It is impossible to sum up Mr. Moore as a critic in any very satisfactory way. He is frankly a decadent, frankly a sensualist, but a decadent and a sensualist of the type of Huysmans, whom he intensely admires:

"A page of Huysmans is as a dose of opium, a glass of some exquisite and powerful liqueur. . . . Huysmans goes to my soul like a gold ornament of

Byzantine workmanship. There is in his style the yearning charm of arches, a sense of ritual, the passion of the mural, of the window."

But Mr. Moore's affinity with Huysmans does not go further than a certain sensuous sympathy. He could never follow him in that curious transformation of which I have elsewhere written, because he has never followed him to the full in the unrelieved brutality that was the essential condition of an ultimate reaction. Mr. Moore must remain intellectually apart from any actual translation of thought into action; he must go on stirred by strange thoughts, forever sensitive to the subtlest æsthetic influences, but to the very last resisting absolutely any impulse towards a definite and final *rangement*.

A word must be said of his style and literary expression; and here again the same analogies with the French are unmistakable. As his critical writing recalls the manner of Barrès and his associates, so his fiction is in style most powerfully dominated by the influence of Zola. This likeness is, indeed, the very first that strikes the casual reader of his pages. He is Zolaesque in his keen perception of the purely physical side of every scene, of every episode, and even of those situations that are properly and pri-



marily psychological. Like Zola, he tries to see a sort of harmony between a state of mind and its external setting. -Like Zola, too, and the other naturalistic writers, his sense of smell is exceedingly acute, and his odor-scheme is as well defined as is the color-scheme of Mr. Stephen Crane, and far less fanciful. He never spares you even the most nauseous osmic detail of the sick-room, of the slum, of the stale and stifling boozing-ken. In his ballroom scenes, under the fragrance of crushed and dying flowers and the most exquisite perfumes, he will detect and note the scent of perspiration, the suggestion of bared necks and arms. The escaping gas of the theatre, the whiff from the sewer-opening, and the indescribable sourness of the drunkard, all run through his descriptive passages like a musical accompaniment—a *motif* directed through the nostrils to the mind. This is reminiscent of Zola, and of Maupassant, the great high-priest of the sense of smell; but it is not imitative, for it is just as natural to Mr. Moore as it is to these great writers, and it is wonderfully effective in its psychical results. We get in him, for example, not merely the Paris that meets the casual eye, but the Paris that is perceptible to the nose as well—the *bouquet* of the boulevard,

the blend of leaves and earth, of wet asphalt, of flaring gas and of cookery, suffused with the suggestion of wine and cigarette smoke, and just a whiff of opoponax and corylopsis from the perfumed silks and laces that brush against us in the gliding throng. To read some paragraphs of *Celibates* gives the exiled *flâneur* a curious reminiscent thrill that almost pulses into pain. Yet, though these subtle appeals to a sense too greatly scorned by the Anglo-Saxon are oftenest made through media that offend, it is only fair to say that, like Zola, and in a far higher degree, Mr. Moore is acutely sensitive to what is beautiful in nature. Some of his descriptions, though nearly always brief, are exquisitely realized, and are set in language that enchants the ear, and through the ear the imagination. Take this of the forest at Barbizon:

"There was an opening in the trees, and below that the dark-green forest waved for miles. It was pleasant to rest—they were tired. The forest murmured like a shell. . . . It extended like a great temple, hushed in the ritual of the sunset. The light that suffused the green leaves overhead glossed the brown leaves underfoot, marking the smooth ground as with a pattern. And like chapels every dell seemed in the tranquil light, and leading from them a labyrinthine

architecture without design or end. Mildred's eyes wandered from the colonnades to the underwoods. She thought of the forest as of a great green prison ; and then her soul fled to the scraps of blue that appeared through the thick leafage, and she longed for large spaces of sky, for a view of a plain, for a pine-plumed hill-top."

"The forest murmured like a shell." That is one of the most exquisite touches of description that the English language owns ; and the whole passage gives, as no painted picture, whether of Cazin or of Harpignies, can ever give, the full effect upon the senses of a vast forest, of its immensity, of its beauty, and of its overpowering oppressiveness.

Here is Kate Lennox, as we first meet her, in *A Mummer's Wife* :

"Nothing was now heard but the methodical click of her needle as it struck the head of her thimble, and then the long swish of the thread as she drew it through the cloth. The lamp at her elbow burned steadily, and the glare glanced along her arm as she raised it with the large movement of sewing. Wherever the light touched it her hair was blue, and it encircled, like a piece of rich black velvet, the white but too prominent temples ; a dark shadow defined the fine, straight nose, hinted at a thin indecision of lips, whilst a broad touch of white marked the weak but not unbeautiful chin. On her knees lay the patch-

work, with its jagged edges, and the floor at her feet was covered with innumerable scraps, making a red and black litter."

Few Anglo-Saxons ever fully entertain a true conception of word-values as the French do, and as George Moore has done. That the exact word always exists, and that any word but the exact word breaks the connection between the writer and the reader's minds, is a fact of which few English or Americans in these slipshod days are cognizant; but with George Moore, half sensitivist and half sensualist, and fed on Mallarmé and Hérédia, the cult of *le mot juste* is a passion. What can be more perfect as an example of cadenced melody than what he has written of Gustave Kahn's *Intermède*?

"The repetitions of Edgar Poe seem hard and mechanical after this, so exquisite and evanescent is the rhythm, and the intonations come as sweetly and suddenly as a gust of perfume; it is as the vibration of a fairy orchestra, flute and violin disappearing in a silver mist; but the clouds break, and all the enchantment of a spring garden appears in a shaft of sudden sunlight."

Our English tongue can get no nearer than it has done here to supreme felicity of phrasing. As a bit of striking personal description and

as the last of these quotations, I select Moore's interesting account of his first meeting with Paul Verlaine, recorded in *Impressions and Opinions*:

"We got into an omnibus, and then we got into a tram. Then we took a cab, and I believe we had to take another tram. We passed factories and canals, and at one moment I thought we were going to take the boat. We at last penetrated into a dim and eccentric region which I had never heard of before. We traversed curious streets, inhabited apparently by people who in dressing never got further than *camisoles* and shirt sleeves; we penetrated into musty-smelling and clamorous court-yards, in which lingered Balzacian *concierges*; we climbed slippery staircases upon which doors stood wide open, emitting odors and permitting occasional views of domestic life—a man in his shirt hammering a boot, a woman, presumably a mother, wiping a baby. . . . In a dark corner, at the end of a narrow passage situated at the top of the last flight of stairs, we discovered a door. We knocked. A voice made itself heard. We entered and saw Verlaine. The terrible forehead, bald and prominent, was half covered by a filthy nightcap, and a night-shirt full of the grease of the bed covered his shoulders; a stained and discolored pair of trousers were hitched up somehow about his waist. He was drinking wine at sixteen sous the litre. He told us that he had just come out of the hospital; that his leg was better, but it still gave him a great deal of pain. He pointed to it. We looked away.

"He said he was writing the sonnet, and promised that we should have it on the morrow. Then, in the grossest language, he told us of the abominations he had included in the sonnet; and seeing that our visit would prove neither pleasant nor profitable, we took our leave as soon as we could."

It remains only to consider what appears to be the most serious and constantly recurring limitation upon Mr. Moore's extraordinary power as a delineator of contemporary life and manners. With all his acuteness of observation, with all his sureness of touch, with all his insight and experience, it is impossible to overlook the very important fact that this insight and experience are very closely circumscribed by what one can only call his ignorance of the brighter side of the social world. Mr. Moore's social attitude is that of a man who has lived in clubs and mingled with men of the world only in those hours which they give to what is usually known as pleasure. His views are the sort of views that one may always hear set forth in the club smoking-room, and his notion of domestic life is the notion formed by one who takes all this cynicism literally and as representing a permanent and predominant state of mind. But every one of large experience knows how utterly misleading all

this is, especially when noted among men of our own race. That the cynic of the smoking-room will, over his *petit verre* and a good cigar, tell improper little stories of the world in which he lives, that he gibes at marriage, that he professes to suspect the virtue of all women, that he airs theories which are at variance with all the traditions of his people—this means absolutely less than nothing in a vast majority of instances. It is the idle talk of men who are in reality tender-hearted, loyal, devoted, reverent, and true; and when any one, like Mr. Moore, constructs for himself a society upon the basis of these post-cenatory conversations he is mistaking an idle phase for a permanent condition. Now the social world that one discovers in Mr. Moore's novels is essentially a mirage of the clubs, and not a thing of which he has a first-hand knowledge. A very brilliant woman of my acquaintance, and one whose invincible determination not to write inflicts a real loss on English literature, has expressed this thought in a figurative sort of way. "It is a pity," she said, after reading one of his novels, "that George Moore is not sometimes willing to drink a cup of tea in the afternoon." But he never is; and brandy-and-soda is about the only beverage suggested by his writing.

This would be no defect at all if he were strictly to confine himself to the actual corner of the world which he knows so well. The innermost recesses of Bohemia, the sweltering slum, the race-course, the public-house, the shop, the *atelier*, the club—here he is quite supreme, a master of detail, a rhyparographer as faithful as Eumachus or the Flemish painters. But he is not content with this. In *A Modern Lover* and *A Drama in Muslin* and *Mike Fletcher* he tries to lead us elsewhere and to show us the English home, the country-side, the men and women who live far from Curzon Street and who know not Leicester Square or the "Empire." And then he fails, and fails in a way that not only disappoints but utterly repels; for here in the quiet nooks and in an atmosphere of tranquillity and peace he shows us still the rakes and bullies, the immodest women, the intrigue, and the assignation. The fragrance of the hedgerows is tainted by patchouly and by chypre; and the heavy opium-charged scent of the Egyptian cigarette comes to our nostrils in the quiet country lanes. To read some of these pages is like witnessing the *danse du ventre* performed around a May-pole. It is false; it is monstrous; it is actually loathsome.



The club smoking-room is suggested also by the language in which Mr. Moore has set down much of what he writes. One does not mind his coarseness merely because it is coarse, but because of its frequent inappropriateness, because he is himself quite conscious of his offence, and because it is tainted by an almost omnipresent suggestion of vulgarity. He has some compunction himself on this score, but he drugs his literary conscience with the quite untenable belief that he is representing a genuine reversion to the freer speech of Fielding and of Smollett; whereas Fielding and Smollett, while often coarse, were never vulgar. They used the language and the phrases of their day with simplicity and complete unconsciousness; while Mr. Moore, with other standards and in a modern age, is forcing a note, and a very false one, in his effort to produce what at its best is but a pure anachronism.

But this defect of his goes even deeper down; and one must frankly say that the source of his vulgarity is more than superficial and comes from something more than a mistaken choice of models. It is far more fundamental, for it colors his whole view of human life and makes this in its last analysis the life of swine and apes. His revelry is not the care-

less revelry of youth, soon set aside for the soberer duties of maturity; it is studied sensualism reduced to a science whose joylessness is as striking as its depravity. It has no mirth, no spontaneity; its record gives us only the impression of jaded senses frantically seeking some new stimulant, loud, mirthless laughter, and the sodden discontent that sits amid the stale odors of the feast in the gray hours of the morning, when the bloodshot eye and the twitching face look spectral in the ghastly light of dawn.

And the persons whom he draws for us are fit for such a life as he describes. His women are of two set types. One is the bold-eyed, full-lipped woman whose person exhales a subtle suggestion of sensuality, and who is ever seeking a seducer. From the young girl in the convent-school to the matron in the ball-room, this is the type that Mr. Moore again and again is meeting and describing with a strange power of erotic suggestion, and a thorough disbelief in the endurance of virtue for any longer time than that required to furnish an opportunity for sin. Chastity, when he does discover it, is not a matter of conscience, but is purely temperamental. A woman may be chaste just as she may be cross-eyed. She is

not responsible for either. Some natures are too cold to sin; they shrink from it only because its promise does not stir them; and in his philosophy natures such as these are rare and utterly abnormal. But over them George Moore devotes little time and thought. He sets the other type before us with a never-ending and persistent relish. When there appears upon the scene a woman's form, he thrusts it on us like a professional *souteneur*. With a frank brutality he catalogues her physical attractions; a pervasive suggestion inspires his pen; he mentally disrobes her, and he laughs softly with the cynical amusement of a Silenus as he notes the effect of his description.

His men are, naturally enough, the moral complement of his women. He has never drawn one noble character, and there is no evidence in any of his work that he even comprehends the English and American conception of a high-bred gentleman. His world is a world of rakes and revellers, of cads, of 'Arries and 'Arriets, with here and there a solitary figure, eccentric and unmanly, whose thin blood or mediæval imagination leads him to slink into pure asceticism and to shudder at the joys of sense. And as among his women we miss the unselfish, the tender, the loyal, and

the loving, so among his men we find no high-minded, generous, manly gentleman whose chivalry and purity of soul remove him to an equal distance from the monkey-cage and the monastic cell.

Such, then, is George Moore—a strange and striking product of French training, a blend of subtlety and coarseness, of cynicism and voluptuousness, of extreme refinement and inefable vulgarity; a profound psychologist, a sensitivist who feels to his very finger-tips the slightest breath of influence, a genius fettered by the chains of pure materialism, yet none the less and with all his limitations and perversities the greatest literary artist who has struck the chords of English since the death of Thackeray.

## THE EVOLUTION OF A MYSTIC



## THE EVOLUTION OF A MYSTIC

WHAT is the psychological secret of the mysterious connection that exists between religious desire in man and the desire that is sensuous and even sensual? That there is some such relation it is impossible to doubt when we look into the records alike of literature and of life. Let one turn to the confessions of Saint Augustine, the loftiest and greatest of the Latin Fathers, and read the appalling chronicle of those wallowings in sin through which he ultimately passed to the saintly life that still shines with undimmed purity down the path of human effort. Let one also call to mind the strangely dual life of Paul Verlaine, who so often sat down, reeking with the odors of the foulest of Parisian *gargotes*, to pour out in verse of almost superhuman sweetness the aspirations of a soul profoundly touched with religious yearning. Nor is it without a deep significance that in ancient times the worship of the gods was

often blended with rites of indescribable eroticism, and that in all ages the vocabulary of religious exaltation has been borrowed from the language of human passion. The Song of Songs, ascribed to Solomon, is, to be sure, no longer viewed as a sacred allegory; yet it was for many centuries so regarded, and the sternest and most ascetic Puritan was not revolted by the thought that its amorous imagery was meant to voice a spiritual sentiment. To take a very modern instance, it was only a few years ago that one of the most widely popular of evangelical hymns was criticised, and not quite unreasonably, because its language was too emphatically suggestive of mere sexual desire. It may be, in fact, that there is something typical and significant in the legend of Saint Anthony, one of the holiest of anchorites, whose chief temptation was that which filled his cell with visions of fair women.

The subject is, perhaps, a little dangerous, and one need not here pursue it any further; yet it is quite irresistibly suggested by a volume which now lies before me, entitled *En Route*, and which one may without exaggeration think not only the greatest novel of the day, but one of the most important, because



it is one of the most characteristic books of our quarter of the century. Until its author, M. Huysmans, wrote it, his name suggested to the readers of French literature nothing more than naturalistic fiction of the rankest and most brutal type—fiction that surpassed the most typical work of Zola in the frankness of its physiology and the shamelessness of its indecency. With *À Rebours*, which appeared in 1885, this Flemish Frenchman reached a sort of morbid climax both in subject and in treatment, and because of this Herr Nordau chose him out as embodying the quintessence of moral and literary degeneracy. Yet it seemed to many at the time of its appearance that in *À Rebours* there was to be detected a new and striking note, an indication of new currents of tendency, a drift away from merely physical analysis, a reaching out towards something which, if not ethically higher, was at any rate more subtle and more psychologically interesting. The later works of M. Huysmans have made it plain that this assumption was a true one; and since *Là Bas* has been succeeded by this latest work, the true significance of the change is very clear. Taking these three novels together, one may rightly view them as embodying a single purpose—a purpose of

which perhaps and probably the writer was himself not always fully conscious, but which, as his task proceeded, fully seized upon his intellect and was, no doubt, developed with the simultaneous development of his own experience.

For it is permissible to think that in setting before us the evolution of a true degenerate, M. Huysmans has been writing a spiritual and intellectual autobiography. Mr. Kegan Paul, to be sure, in an admirable introduction to his translation of the book, declares that such an assertion is both impertinent and unnecessary; but even he avoids a flat denial of its truth. Whether it be impertinent or not, it will occur with great force to every one who knows the story of M. Huysmans' life and who is thoroughly familiar with his works; nor can one think that the hypothesis is one which the author would himself resent. It seems, indeed, impossible that the strange things set forth in *À Rebours* could have been imagined by a person whose own life had been free from any such experience, or that the intensity of feeling that marks the strongest chapters of *En Route* could be merely the *tour de force* of a clever writer. We shall not, therefore, be far wrong if we assume that we have

now before us the record of a searching self-analysis, however much the superficial incidents of the story be altered from the actual facts. This must be borne in mind, for the books, that form a sort of series, refer ostensibly to different persons; yet it is, in reality, but one single experience that M. Huysmans is relating. For whether the protagonist be spoken of as Des Esseintes in *À Rebours* or as Durtal in *En Route*, the change of name implies no change in personality, nor in the conditions of the psychological and moral problem that is presented for our contemplation.

The story itself is the narrative of a man who has deliberately cultivated sensation to the point where it has touched the very extreme of enervation, and who in this persistent quest has exhausted the possibilities of physical pleasure, until at last the morbid and the abnormal have reached the narrow line that marks the verge of sanity. This phase is set before us in *À Rebours*, perhaps the strangest effort of perverse imagination that literature can show. Here we find the degenerate already sated with the pleasures of the flesh, jaded and fatigued, yet seeking still for something to excite at least a momentary interest, and endeavoring to find it in the piquancy

of a life in which everything shall be utterly abnormal, in which all the modes and all the conditions of ordinary existence shall be consistently reversed. He, therefore, creates for himself a home apart from any possible contact with other men, where in every possible way he follows out the cult of the artificial as being the supreme attainment of human genius. He is served by unseen attendants, who avoid entering his presence. He never quits his home. He sleeps, when his insomnia permits it, by day, and prowls about his habitation in the hours when other men are sleeping. His living-rooms are enclosed one within another, with holes that admit an artificial light through glass receptacles filled with water colored by essences to a muddy yellow, and containing mechanical fish that pass slowly back and forth through clusters of sham seaweed. The chamber is impregnated with the smell of tar and decorated with crude lithographs of ships and seascapes. In this strange place he amuses himself with experimenting in the theories of Symbolism, translating each of the senses into terms of another. Wishing to hear music, he summons its sensations by drinking drops of curious liqueurs, whose effect upon the taste excites in his mind the sensa-

tions analogous to those produced by different instruments of music—dry curaçoa recalling the clarinet, gin and whiskey the trombone, anisette the flute, and Chios-raki and mastic the cymbal and the kettledrum. When he longs for the effect produced by pictures, he obtains it through his sense of smell, mixing together the perfumes that bring up before his depraved imagination landscapes or city scenes, the dressing-room of the theatre, or the surgeon's clinic, where ulcers and festering wounds attract his thought. His morbid ingenuity evokes from every scent an optical sensation, from the smell of stephanotis and ayapana to that of ordure and of human sweat. When he eats, and before his body revolts from the abnormality of his tastes, he dines on buttered roast beef dipped in tea. There is no need to recapitulate the further details of this phase of his development. On the face of it there seems to be nothing in the tale but what is morbid and delirious, and to a healthy mind both hideous and revolting. Yet, as has been already said, one can here detect a subtle note that is not found in *Marthe* or *Sœurs Vatard*. The cult of the purely physical has ceased to satisfy, and there is a vaguely outlined longing for something

intangible which the flesh alone cannot allay.

In *La Bas*, the second novel of the series, this longing has taken a more definite form. We see a quite distinctly formulated interest in the spiritual, or at least the supernatural. Mere animalism retires into the background of the mental picture, though it still exists as a discordant and disturbing element. The degenerate hero of the book has turned his mind towards the phenomena of the religious sentiment as a sphere neglected heretofore, and perhaps quite capable of affording new sensations. Yet, as before in other things he utterly reversed all normal notions, so in this new quest his impulses are inspired by perversity. He approaches religion from the stand-point of its contemner. Where a normal sinner would seek the influence of prayer and worship, Durtal enrolls himself among those fearful creatures who embrace the cult of Satanism. These singular rites, as one tradition tells us, were brought to Western Europe from the East by the Knights Templars at the time of the Crusades, and were finally at least the pretext for the dissolution of that famous order. As many know, the cult survives in France, and has not been unknown in Eng-

land during the past hundred years; for students of literary history will remember how it found a devotee in Lord le Despencer, who practised it with men like Wilkes and Byron and Paul Whitehead at Medmenham in the old Cistercian abbey. Durtal is led by the influence of one Madame Chantelouve, a diabolic creature, to join in the frightful practices of the Satanists. He is present at a Black Mass, where blasphemy supplants the Litany, where prayer is mocked by cursing, and where images of the devil and his angels take the place of God and of the saints. By Madame Chantelouve he is lured into various acts of sacrilege, some of them involuntary; and thus he seems to have sunk to an even lower depth than when he lived the frankly pagan life of an eccentric decadent. Yet one feels in laying down the book that the end is not yet; that Durtal is still groping in the darkness, and that the very violence and outrageousness of his impulses may lead him at last into a reaction against the physical and moral disease that vexes him.

In *En Route* we observe a striking contrast at the very outset. Durtal is presented to us as already weaned, in spirit at least, from the life that he has led so long. He is shown as

one who has accepted in the fullest sense the faith of the Catholic Church. The processes of his conversion are not detailed, but they may be inferred from what is told us in the opening chapter. Led on by curiosity, and perhaps by a desire for new experiences, he began to study the manifestations of the religious sentiment, and at once his mind and imagination alike were seized and held fast by the artistic side of the Roman ritual. He set himself to learn the inner history of the Church, the lives of saints, and the story of passionate devotion which those lives have illustrated. He steeped himself in the spirit of the Middle Ages, and sought out those sanctuaries where that spirit still finds its manifestations apart from the sordidness of modern life. The stately Gregorian music, the child-like yet affecting forms of mediæval art, the ancient churches whose chapels are dimmed by the smoke of innumerable censers and impregnated with the odor of extinguished tapers and of burning incense, excited in him indescribable emotions.

"Among these [churches] St. Séverin seemed to Durtal the most exquisite and the most certain. He felt at home there; he believed that if he could ever pray in earnest he could do it in that church; and he said to himself that therein lived the spirit of the



fabric. It is impossible but that the burning prayers, the hopeless sobs of the Middle Ages, have not forever impregnated the pillars and stained the walls ; it is impossible but that the vine of sorrows whence of old the saints gathered warm clusters of tears has not preserved from those wonderful days emanations which sustain, a breath which still awakes a shame of sin and the gift of tears."

He enters into the dim aisles of a vast cathedral and listens to the magnificent music that the distant choir sings. The passage is a striking one :

"Durtal sat down again. The sweetness of his solitude was enhanced by the aromatic perfume of wax and the memories, now faint, of incense, but it was suddenly broken. As the first chords crashed on the organ Durtal recognized the *Dies Irae*, that despairing hymn of the Middle Ages ; instinctively he bowed his head and listened.

"This was no more, as in the *De Profundis*, a humble supplication, a suffering which believes it has been heard, and discerns a path of light to guide it in the darkness, no longer the prayer which has hope enough not to tremble ; it was the cry of absolute desolation and terror. And, indeed, the wrath divine breathed tempestuously through these stanzas. They seemed addressed less to the God of Mercy, to the Son who listens to prayer, than to the inflexible Father, to Him whom the Old Testament shows us overcome with anger, scarcely appeased by the smoke of the pyres

and the inconceivable attractions of burnt-offerings. In this chant it asserted itself still more savagely, for it threatened to strike the waters, and break in pieces the mountains, and to rend asunder the depths of heaven by thunder-bolts. And the earth, alarmed, cried out in fear.

“A crystalline voice, a clear, child’s voice, proclaimed in the nave the tidings of these cataclysms, and after this the choir chanted new strophes wherein the implacable judge came with shattering blare of trumpet to purify by fire the rottenness of the world.

“Then, in its turn, a bass, deep as a vault, as though issuing from the crypt, accentuated the horror of these prophecies, made these threats more overwhelming; and after a short strain by the choir, an alto repeated them in still more detail. Then, as soon as the awful poem had exhausted the enumeration of chastisement and suffering, in shrill tones—the falsetto of a little boy—the name of Jesus went by, and a light broke in upon the thunder-cloud, the panting universe cried for pardon, recalling, by all the voices of the choir, the infinite mercies of the Saviour, and His pardon, pleading with Him for absolution, as formerly He had spared the penitent thief and the Magdalen. But in the same despairing and headstrong melody the tempest raged again, drowned with its waves the half-seen shores of heaven, and the solos continued, discouraged, interrupted by the recurrent weeping of the choir, giving, with the diversity of voices, a body to the special conditions of shame, the particular states of fear, the different ages of tears.

“At last, when, still mixed and blended, these voices

had borne away on the great waters of the organ all the wreckage of human sorrows, all the buoys of prayers and tears, they fell exhausted, paralyzed by terror, wailing and sighing like a child who hides its face, stammering *Dona eis requiem*, they ended, worn out, in an Amen so plaintive that it died away in a breath above the sobbing of the organ.

"What man could have imagined such despair or dreamed of such disasters? And Durtal made answer to himself, 'No man.'"

In fact, Durtal was brought back to religion by his love for art; and the sight of the countless worshippers who knelt day after day before the crucifix shook to the depths his tainted soul. He believed, and his whole being cried out for a refuge from his disgust with life, his infinite weariness of self. But as yet he had faith alone. He could not pray; he could not even master the temptations of the flesh that kept assailing him with even greater strength than heretofore. He sinned and sinned again, even while his mind was full of these new emotions. But at this moment he fell under the influence of a priest, a shrewd, kindly man, of vast experience, cultivated, and a keen judge of human nature. Him Durtal consults, not as a priest so much as a sympathetic friend; and little by little he yields to the kindly influence of the shrewd old Abbé.

With infinite tact and delicate finesse the Abbé leads him on to take an interest in those orders in the Church that are purely contemplative—especially the Trappist branch of the Cistercians. Little by little Durtal's imagination is fired by the thought of a life of such pure devotion, until at last the Abbé Gévresin suggests that he spend a short time as a "retreatant" in the Trappist monastery of Notre Dame de l'Atre, shut out from the world, and surrounded by the influence and example of those monks who approach in their lives the nearest to complete self-abnegation. Durtal is startled at the thought. He asks questions as to the restraints that are imposed upon a layman who enters even for a week a monastery such as this. His first objections are singular in their modernness. He is fond of cigarettes, and cannot think of giving up tobacco. He hates oily cookery, and he cannot digest milk in any form. But the notion of becoming a retreatant fascinates him. He reflects and hesitates. It occurs to him that he can perhaps find some way of smoking cigarettes by stealth in the woods about the monastery. He thinks that he can stand the cooking. At last, after days of internal conflict, he decides to go, and makes a prayer—a most curious prayer:

“Take count of this, O Lord : I know by experience that when I am ill-fed I have neuralgia. Humanly, logically speaking, I am certain to be horribly ill at Notre Dame de l'Atre ; nevertheless, if I can get about at all, the day after to-morrow I will go all the same. In default of love, this is the only proof I can give that I desire Thee, that I truly hope and believe in Thee ; but do Thou, O Lord, aid me.”

The same odd mixture of modernity and mediævalism is seen throughout. Durtal, with his mind filled by thoughts of St. Magdalen of Pazzi and Bonaventura and Dionysius the Areopagite, stuffs his valise with pink packages of cigarettes, and Menier's sweet chocolate, and antipyrine, and sets out for the monastery from the Gare du Nord. It is impossible to give here even the briefest recapitulation of his experiences, which Huysmans tells with minute detail and the most extraordinary frankness. His life as a retreatant, his spiritual struggles, his mental battles with unbelief, his victories and his defeats, are vivid in their realism. One feels that this is just what would be the experience of a modern, only half-weaned from a loose and lawless life, suddenly plunged into an atmosphere of the strictest mediævalism. This life keeps recurring to the imagination of Durtal. A certain Florence comes to his mind

with maddening persistency. He sees continually her sly face aping the modesty of a little girl, her slim body, her strange tastes that lead her to drink toilet-scents and to eat caviare with dates. Once he believes that Satan himself enters the room and fills it with visions of horror. Again, in the midst of prayer, he is seized with a fearful longing to rise and yell out blasphemies. He finally goes to confession, and the scene is told with curious minuteness. Then at last a great calm comes upon him. The atmosphere of intense devotion, the sublime reality of the faith that inspires all about him, their life devoted to the single end of praise and worship and adoration, and the benignant and sympathetic kindness of the monks soothe and comfort and strengthen him. Here are rest and hope and perfect tranquillity; and the book ends with his regretful return to Paris and the expression of his longing for a life of religious contemplation.

"If they [his loose companions] knew how inferior they are to the lowest of the lay brothers! If they could imagine how the divine intoxication of a Trappist interests me more than all their conversations and all their books! Ah, Lord, that I might live, live in the shadow of the prayers of humble Brother Simeon!"

*En Route* is interesting in many ways. It is

unique among the other books of Huysmans in style no less than in spirit. Here he has wholly put aside the studied bareness and hardness of expression that characterize his earlier method, and the descriptive passages glow with color and abound in strange felicities of expression. His enthusiasm for the purely mediæval fairly carries him away, and I think has led him into indefensible extremes. Did space permit we should like to say something of his evident devotion to plain song as against the harmonized Gregorian chant of Palestrina, for I think that the greatest masters of church music would decline to follow him in his lack of discrimination between the plain song in the Prefaces to the Mass and in the other portions of the service where more than a single voice is necessary for the full effect. His enthusiasm leads him also into long and rather tedious digressions upon the history of the mediæval saints, whose lives he insists upon detailing with remorseless elaboration, so that the effect produced is thoroughly inartistic from a literary point of view, and gives the impression of one who has crammed up a subject and is unwilling to lose any portion of his material.

Interesting also is the psychological side of the book, with its implied thesis that faith, like

all other emotions, is contagious ; and with its illustration of the thought with which I commenced this paper, that the sensual nature under certain influences can become the most profoundly spiritual and religious. M. Huysmans is usually classified as one of the disciples of Émile Zola ; but Zola could never have written a book like this, for, in spite of the contrary opinion that prevails, Zola is no sensualist, in the fullest meaning of the word. He is only an intense materialist, and he lacks a sympathetic insight into phenomena that are purely spiritual. He is like the photographer who, with equal unconcern and as a matter of mere business, will in the same hour turn his camera upon the dead child in its coffin filled with flowers, or upon the leering dancer in her spangled tights.

To those of us who are Protestants the book is full of deep instruction in revealing with startling force the secret of the power of that wonderful religious organization which has made provision for the needs of every human soul, whether it requires for its comfort active service or the mystical life of contemplation. We see how every want is understood and how for every spiritual problem an answer is provided ; how the experience of twenty centuries



has been stored up and recorded, and how all that man has ever known is known to those who guide and perpetuate this mighty system. And in these days when Doctors of Divinity devote their energies to nibbling away the foundations of historic faith, and when the sharpest weapons of agnosticism are forged on theological anvils, there is something reassuring in the contemplation of the one great Church that does not change from age to age, that stands unshaken on the rock of its convictions, and that speaks to the wavering and troubled soul in the serene and lofty accents of divine authority.



## THE PASSING OF NORDAU



## THE PASSING OF NORDAU

IT must seem a little curious to many readers of current literature that Max Nordau's ponderous indictment of modern civilization has so soon and so completely passed into the limbo of half-forgotten things. There was a moment when it appeared as though a great light had flashed upon the dark corners of society, displaying abysmal depths of foulness and corruption lying all about us; as though for an instant there had been revealed a ghastly spectre hovering over the modern world and, like the Erl-King of German legend, reaching out a hideous paw to destroy all that is dearest and holiest in the lives of mortal men. To-day, while in the remoter parts of the country *Degeneration* has probably its share of startled readers, the world at large has ceased to think of it; and its portentous pages have left no mark behind them save the addition of a few phrases to the literary slang of the time, and perhaps a deeper taint upon

the morbid imagination of a few disordered minds. What appeared for the moment to be the voice of one crying in the wilderness to prepare the social cosmos for the damnation that was sure to come, is now very clearly seen to have been merely a well-timed though unwholesome and spasmodic literary sensation.

It is the strange rapidity and completeness of this decline of interest in Nordau's fulminations that make the various volumes written to refute his arguments appear almost as antiquated as an attack on Fourierism or as a serious polemic against the Millerite delusion. Thinking men have taken Nordau's measure. They have analyzed his utterances, and examined his facts, and tested the logic of his deductions; and as a result of their examination they have laid his book aside and turned to other and more profitable themes.

It is, of course, from one point of view, unfair to drag into a discussion the personality of a writer in estimating the value of his theses, for this sort of thing is bound to smack of the argument *ad hominem*; yet in the case of Herr Nordau it is impossible not to reflect upon his character and temperament as revealed in all his published work; for a knowledge of these things has undoubtedly contrib-

uted to minimize the influence of his book. Moreover, one need feel no great compunction in speaking of him very frankly, for in *Degeneration* he has erected a whole mountain of theory upon his own estimate of living men, and has taken it upon himself in the most off-hand fashion to define their motives and to question their sincerity. And when his book was flung before the eyes of the Anglo-Saxon world, the first question asked on every hand was, "Who is Nordau?"

A quick-witted Jew, imbued, like many of his race to-day, with an impenetrable materialism, a sceptic and yet a doctrinaire, Nordau is less an individual than a type, and a type raised to the *n*th. For him the world of spirit has absolutely no existence, the altruistic motive no force, ideal beauty no reality. Trained to study the perversities of the phenomena that are revealed to the alienist, tracing everything to a physical source, and accepting to the full the theories of his master, Lombroso, he is an ideal illustration of the credulity of science. He cannot believe in imagination save as a symptom of irrationality; he cannot recognize any love of beauty save as a manifestation of erotomania. Yet he can worship physiology as a clue to all the mysteries of

life, and think himself able to sound the very depths of the human soul by measuring men's ears and noting down the conformation of their frontal bones. From the earliest days of his student life he seems to have had a strangely morbid curiosity as to the abnormal. He pried into all the dark corners of diseased mentality; he collected all the prurient details of the psychiatrist's practice; and with an avid delight he gleaned in the remotest fields of sexual psychopathy. The few unhappy creatures who in another age would have raved behind the bars of a mad-house, but whom the printing-press has given to-day a speaking-tube to reach the public ear, Nordau watches with the joy of a connoisseur, jotting down in a note-book every fearful phrase, and garnering up every perverse, disjointed thought. He wades through whole libraries, to wrench from its context any bit of reprehensible description and add it to his collection. Presently he has volumes upon volumes of this sort of stuff; he has haunted the hospitals and asylums, and made for himself a little world of his own, peopled by the ghastly figures of the diseased, the dying, and the degenerate; and then at last he comes out into the greater world—the world of sunlight and sanity—with



a mind that has itself become perverted, a mind that has lost its sense of proportion, and has grown intellectually color-blind. He has so accustomed himself to watching for telltale symptoms that he sees them on every side, even in the healthiest mind and the soundest body. The slightest coincidences are to him conclusive evidence of identity; and he puts his own hideous interpretation upon everything that meets his view, until, as has been very truly said, he is himself an abnormality and a pathological type. Every large hospital for the insane knows his representative—the one sane man in a world of lunatics. Yet there is a very apparent method in his madness. He has a canny, commercial side to him that is extremely characteristic of his race; and seeing that certain topics are attracting some attention, and that the world is ready for a new sensation, he infers that the psychological moment has arrived; and at once, gathering up his ponderous note-books, he compacts them into a bulky volume, garnishes them with a pseudo-scientific sauce, cooks up a theory to justify his exposure, and launches the delectable combination upon an appreciative market.

Probably the strongest proof of the falsity

of Nordau's view of society is to be found in the sensation which his book created; for this sensation was not that which springs from startled conviction and guilty recognition, but from sheer astonishment and incredulity. It was the shock which might be felt by a traveller who, walking quietly along a pleasant road, should find his way blocked by a mighty avalanche of muck. At first he might believe that here was some great cataclysm, some wonderful phenomenon of nature; but a moment's inspection would speedily convince him that, after all, it was muck, and nothing more. And so with Nordau's book. The world wondered for a moment, because the world at large had never even dreamed that such things as Nordau wrote of were in existence. Thousands of intelligent men and women had never so much as heard the names of Huysmans and Nietzsche and Paul Verlaine. The subtleties of the Symbolists were unknown to them. They had innocently looked upon Wagner as a great master of dramatic music, upon Ruskin as a refined and stimulating critic, upon Tolstoi as a powerful novelist and a sincere if impracticable humanitarian. And as to the darker and more repellent facts set forth by Nordau from the treatises of Krafft-Ebing and other special-

ists in neuropathy, of these things they had never even had an inkling. Therefore, just as the traveller described above, after looking for a moment at the muck-heap, would simply hold his nose and pass around it, so Nordau's readers, after a very short consideration of his pages, metaphorically held their noses and turned away from the further contemplation of his pornographic pile.

Some few, however, interested in the abnormality of the whole thing, lingered for a while to investigate it in a scientific spirit; and these speedily found good reasons for the contempt which was with the world at large a matter of unerring instinct and intuition. They at once detected the unreality and fundamental unimportance of it all. They noted the singular perversity that deduced from every intellectual product of the age one and the same conclusion; that called one man a maniac because he wrote so much, and another man a maniac because he wrote so little; that set down still another as an incipient criminal because his ears were said to be pointed at the ends, and a fourth as subject to "echolalia" because his verse abounds in cadenced repetitions; that in one place declared human beings too good and noble to need the fear of hell,

and in another place described them as too vile to dispense with the fear of the gallows and the hangman.

They noted him saying that material success in life is a test of sound-mindedness, and yet considering just how far the same success is evidence of degeneracy. They saw him also, with a subtlety of erotic suggestion, detecting sexuality in what all men before him had seen nothing but the beauty and the joy of art, and infusing a lingering taint into some of the noblest creations of the human imagination. Finally, they turned to what Nordau had himself produced in the sphere of fiction, and there finding writ large the sordid sensuality which he had wantonly ascribed to the masters of modern literature, they at once convicted him beyond the possibility of defence of all that he had claimed to see in others. It needed only a clear appreciation of these things to discredit and refute the whole elaborate attack that he had made upon the age ; and when it was quite plainly understood that the author of *Degeneration* was himself simply a stray degenerate, raving with foul words at his environment, all interest in him, save as in an abnormal type, at once declined.

To my mind the most forceful and truly il-

luminative comment on his book is that in which the anonymous author of a recent volume called *Regeneration* traces in Nordau's work and in his mental attitude the influence of a powerful German bias, and which sets forth in very vigorous and convincing language the essential traits of the typical German. A single sentence will suffice to give the reader a clue to his argument:

"German education and German surroundings tend to foster in the human mind veneration for authority, contempt for the plebeian, distrust of liberty, a firm belief in the unquenchable power of man's lowest instincts, a nervous demand for authoritative repression of human passions, and contentment with prosaic existence, small resources, and poor prospects."

How true this is and how far-reaching is the truth in its practical manifestations, every one who has lived in Germany, or who has studied German character as mirrored in German history and in the social characteristics of the German people, must be profoundly conscious. The typical German is a being who, if he gives play to the higher and more creative impulses at all, does so only in the sphere of imagination, while his actual life is dominated by the most intense materialism. A pure sentimen-

talist, his thought and his action have apparently no relation whatever to each other. He contemplates with intellectual enthusiasm the ideal beauty, and he lives contented with the most squalid environment. He worships ideal purity, and he indulges himself in methodical sensuality. He writes lachrymose verse imbued with chivalrous sentiment for woman, and then he yokes his wife with a dog or an ass and sets her ploughing in his potato-fields. He can describe on paper an elaborate Utopia of justice and political perfection, and he is governed by one of the rankest and most brutal despotisms that ever smothered human freedom under the bonds of a military bureaucracy. Hence it is that the Germans, with all their training and all their many admirable traits, are lacking in constructiveness, in spontaneity, in creative boldness. When things go wrong, and when an American or an Englishman would take his coat off and set them right by the vigor and originality of his native energy, a German rolls up his eyes helplessly and begins to whimper for some higher power to tell him what to do. A curious indication of this national proneness to despair is seen in the fact that of all the suicides recorded in our daily press by far the greater number is that of men and

women with German names. And this is why the history of Germany is what it is—a history of divided and discordant principalities, of a people submitting to the rule of a hundred petty despots, unable to do more than maunder over the liberty that none of them would strike a blow to win; of a people who forgot at Napoleon's bidding their national self-respect, and fought his battles for him against their own kindred and natural allies. In 1848 they had a chance to show what they could do at constructing a parliamentary government, and they produced nothing but a windy debating society of visionary doctrinaires, to be soon dismissed contemptuously by a military prince. When some strong, masterful spirit arises among them—a man like Frederick the Great or Bismarck—they do not use him as a national instrument, but he sets his foot on all their necks and forces them to do his bidding. Hence it is that Germany presents to-day the astounding spectacle of a nation, the most highly educated in the world, governed by drill-sergeants and sub-lieutenants, accepting a *régime* that makes it a penal offence to speak disrespectfully of an artillery-mule, and in which the best born, the most eminent, and the most highly trained all flock with enthusias-

tic self-abasement to lick the jack-boots of a pinchbeck Cæsar.

It is quite reasonable, therefore, to recognize in Nordau's book a true reflection of the German temperament. The pedantic marshalling of documentary evidence to convict whole nations, the intellectual near-sightedness that sees no further than the hospital and the dissecting-room and that knows nothing of the play of forces in the greater world beyond, the moral cowardice, the negation of hope, the grossness of the materialism, the suspicious distrust, the attempt to reduce the things of the spirit to an unvarying formula—surely these are not the traits of the broad-minded, far-seeing, and sane philosopher. They suggest rather the Herr Professor in his stuffy study, evolving from his books and from his inner consciousness a theory for interminable exploitation in the lecture-room. Nordau's whole work, in fact, came bearing the ear-marks of a nation that regards an intelligent machine as the perfection of human progress, that finds in every vista an *impasse*, and that sees in every paltry mole-hill the menace of a mighty mountain.

But what is one to say of Nordau's main contention that our age is marked with the



stigmata of degeneracy? Is the world really growing better or is it growing worse? Probably the serious student of social phenomena would say that in reality there is little actual gain from one generation to another, but that in all ages and among all civilized peoples the sum total of essential morality remains unchanged. At one period some particular vice or some particular virtue will be in the ascendant, and at another period another. In early Rome, for instance, chastity and personal honesty were the rule, yet they were accompanied by an utter lack of humanity and of the softer virtues. A wife could be beaten to death for drinking wine; Cato could order an innocent slave to be slain merely to impress the other serfs with their master's power. Under the Empire such cruelty became impossible, yet the growth of the sentiment of mercy was coincident with a decline of integrity and of sexual morality. And so, too, in the case of contemporaneous peoples, neither the especial vice nor the especial virtue of the one is necessarily that of the other. There is no doubt, for instance, that the standard of commercial morality is appreciably higher in England than in the United States, and that the laws of property are held to be more sacred there than

here ; but, on the other hand, the brute who in England kicks his wife with heavy clogs gets off with a small fine, while to all men is permitted a degree of license in the sphere of personal morality which if practised here would insure an instant ostracism.

And so the balance is apparently kept even. Yet, after all, the impartial student of manners, who looks back over the pages of history and the record of men's lives, can scarcely fail to perceive with every cycle a certain steady progress that is not merely onward, but upward too. The dark side of the picture is not quite so dark as it was once, and the bright side is far brighter. The standards of virtue are, at any rate, accepted now by all men, and acceptance must ultimately mean observance also. Humanity moves onward with a stumbling step and many a halt, yet it does advance, and with every century its gaze is fixed with an increasing steadiness upon the lofty and immutable ideals of justice and mercy and purity and truth.

## THE MIGRATION OF POPULAR SONGS

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## THE MIGRATION OF POPULAR SONGS

LEST the reader should find, as he easily might, some ambiguity in the title of this short paper, it may be well to explain, by way of premise, that popular songs are here taken to mean only the songs of the day, ephemeral, trivial, and of little or no musical value—the songs that spring up, as it were, in a night, that are sung and whistled and played for a few weeks or months, and are then forgotten. The songs that endure for generations, though often of no greater intrinsic merit, are more truly described as national songs; for the national song is by no means necessarily one whose words and music, or even the circumstances of whose composition, are associated with an historical or patriotic event. The *Ranz des Vaches*, for instance, is most truly the national air of Switzerland, though it is only a herdsman's strain; and Bayard Taylor's poem keeps alive the fact that on the eve of the bloodiest battle

of the Crimean War the Scotch regiments fed their martial spirit by singing, not the stirring music of their grandest battle-hymn, *Scots wha hae*, but the simple strains of *Annie Laurie*. Just what gives vitality to some of these songs it is hard to say ; but the fact is plain enough that while most of them pass out of memory within a year, a few express in some subtle way the deeper feelings of a nation and live throughout the rest of its history. Thus *Partant pour la Syrie*, and *Ça Ira*, and the *Carmagnole*, and *Yankee Doodle*, and *Marching Through Georgia* will outlive the French and American republics, while *En R'v'nant de la Revue*, and *Père la Victoire*, and *Just Before the Battle*, and *We Don't Want to Fight* are forgotten in a single generation. And the reason for the immortality of the one set and for the oblivion of the other is about equally mysterious.

The popular song, however, in the restricted sense of the word—the song of the whistling boy and the street-piano—is at present often able to secure a brief respite from immediate forgetfulness, to cheat oblivion, and secure a second lease of life by a species of migration.

In these days, when travel is cheap and when each nation, being more or less informed about

its neighbor's doings, finds it an amusing thing to be imitative and cosmopolitan, the popular song is one of the objects that, like food, fashions, and literature, are amiably borrowed. Thus it happens that when some ditty has become such a nuisance in the land of its birth as to make its public rendition more or less unsafe, it suddenly disappears, and almost immediately reappears in some other country, where it is treated as an attractive novelty. When it springs up again in this way among a people whose language is not that of its author, it often suffers a sea-change; but the music is usually unaltered, while the transformation of its words is often very characteristic and amusing.

One would say *a priori* that England and America would be the greatest borrowers of the *chansonette*. As Germany is the most musical land in the world, and as France is the home of the *café chantant*, it might be supposed that the English "music-hall" and the American "variety show" would find the French and German airs an inexhaustible store to borrow from. But the truth of the matter is quite the reverse, and for two very different reasons. As regards Germany, it is precisely because the Germans are so musical that the

foreign conveyer of popular songs finds so little to appropriate. The German's taste in music is so educated and he takes his music so seriously, as to make nonsense-songs, such as those of our country and of England, appear to him neither amusing nor agreeable. They are simply monstrosities, fit only for eccentric and Philistine nations, such as he supposes us to be. The Tingeltangel plays no such important part in the economy of his amusements as does the *café chantant* in the diversions of the French. When he listens to music, it must be good in itself. The difference is well seen in such an establishment as Kroll's Garten, in Berlin—a place in many respects akin to the Folies Bergère, of Paris. It is an immense beer-garden; yet its open-air music is rendered by a really fine orchestra, supplemented occasionally by some of the military bands of the garrison; while in the adjacent theatre appear singers of international celebrity, who interpret the rôles of the lighter of the grand operas, such as the *Meistersinger*, the *Trompeter von Säkingen*, and *The Flying Dutchman*. In fact, the German seldom descends to any lower depth, musically, than the comic opera; and when an American, an Englishman, or a Frenchman would be hum-



ming *The Band Played On* or *Gigolette*, a German contents himself with a bit of Millöcker or Suppé—something far from classical, if you will, but by no means cheap and vulgar. And as he does not himself produce our sort of popular song, still less does he import those which we have made. Some of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas he will tolerate (the airs from the *Mikado* were rather popular in Germany at one time), and Mr. Reginald De Koven is not unknown; but that is the limit of his toleration. It is true that in the numerous Tingeltangels our comic songs are often heard, but they are sung in their original form by foreign singers, English and American, and are listened to by the Germans in the same spirit in which a visitor to Chinatown enjoys the performance of a Mongolian orchestra. Hence our purveyors of popular music find nothing of the kind in Germany to appropriate; but with true American audacity they have gone straight to the classical music, and from it have filched innumerable themes. It may not be generally known, for instance, that the chorus of *Oh, How I Love My Ada* is taken bodily from the overture to *Zanetta*, that the chorus of *Paradise Alley* is an echo of the drinking-song in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, that

*Annie Rooney* is taken directly, with a mere change of *tempo*, from a chorale of Bach ; and that *Down went McGinty* is stolen from another. It is an amusing fact that Wagner derived the so-called bell-motif in *Parsifal* from the last-named source ; so that we have the great master of modern music drinking from the same fountain of inspiration as the author of *Down went McGinty*!

Again, not very much is borrowed from the French. The reason for this is to be found, I think, in the musical characteristics of the French *chansonnettes*. The French popular music is eminently vivacious ; it has a sort of sparkle that is distinctly Gallic ; but there is something about it that makes it rather unattractive to an English ear. It is too jerky ; it lacks rhythm and melody ; and it does not easily fix itself in the memory. It is, in fact, rather thin, and irresistibly suggests the nasal tones and cracked pianos of the *gargotes* through which it finally passes into oblivion. Hence it is not often borrowed, the exceptions being found principally in semi-military songs. These are occasionally transplanted to England and America, though they are there not sung, but arranged for military bands and for orchestras. An instance of this

is the Boulangist chant, *En R'v'nant de la Revue*, first sung by Paulus at the Alcazar d'Été, and speedily taken up all over France by the partisans of the *brav' Général*. It was at once *cabled* to this country (a journalistic feat achieved by the New York *Herald*), and was heard everywhere, but only as an air, no words ever having been written for it in English, so far as I know. A later French success, *Père la Victoire*, likewise "created" by Paulus at the Eldorado, was at one time a good deal played by military bands in England, where it was also set to new words; but as a song it had no success. Therefore, the fact remains that while we borrow French fashions, French cookery, French plays, and French novels, the Anglo-Saxon world cares very little for French popular songs.

Equally unsuccessful has proved the attempt to adapt for English and American use any of the numerous *canzonette* of Italy, and for the same reasons. Perhaps the last attempt to make a hit in this way was that of Miss Lottie Collins, who, after the song which is especially associated with her name had been worn threadbare, announced with a good deal of journalistic trumpeting a new one entitled *Marguerite of Monte Carlo*. This was in real-

ity an English adaptation of a Neapolitan *canzone* by the popular song-writer Piedigrotta, first sung at the Salone Margherita in Naples in 1892, when it caught the fancy of the populace immensely, and was soon sung, whistled, and played all over Italy. The original was called *Margarita de Parete*, and was written in dialect. It has a good deal of swing to it, but in spite of Miss Collins's own popularity, and her persistent efforts to make it a success, it fell rather flat, and never reached the street-piano.

Not many of our popular airs, then, are foreign; but a very great many of ours are caught up by the French, especially those songs whose English words have a jingle that tickles the Gallic ear with a suggestion of eccentricity. Such, for example, is an absurd but rather tuneful ditty, once much in vogue in England, though never very well known in this country, and entitled *Linger Longer, Loo*. The original is by Messrs. Young and Sidney Jones, and it so amused the first Frenchman who heard it that it was almost immediately carried to Paris. French words were written by M. Henri Dreyfus, the English chorus being retained, and it was sung by no less a personage than the famous Yvette Guilbert, and later by Mlle. Duclerc at the Folies Bergère. The first

verse of the French rendering will give a good idea of *le genre Anglaisiste*, so called :

Ça n'vous amuse pas c'que j' dis là  
 Moi non plus je l'atteste,  
 Mais il faut bien par ci par là,  
 Chanter de tout et l'reste.  
 Mon répertoire est folichon  
 A c'que dis'nt les familles  
 Aussi ma p'tite *English* chanson  
 Est fait' pour les jeunes filles.  
 Leurs papas diront c'est plus beau  
 Bien qu' vous n' compreniez pas un mot,  
 Ell's pens'ront, sûr, y'a pas d'plaisir  
 Du moment qu'on n' peut pas rougir!

*"Linger longer, Lucy, linger longer, Loo,  
 How I love to linger, Lucy, linger long o' you;  
 Listen while I sing, ah, tell me you'll be true,  
 Linger longer, longer linger, linger longer, Loo!"*

*The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo* was a great favorite with the French, and their version of it was a close paraphrase of the English, though it very characteristically represented the breaker of the bank as a woman, and not a man. The title of it was *J'ai fait sauter la banque à Monte Carlo*. As a rule, the music alone is taken, the French words having no reference to the original ones. Thus, *Daisy Bell*, or, as the French usually wrote it, *Daysey*

*Bell*, furnished the music for a rather amusing set of verses by M. Dreyfus, who is an Anglophobe, in which *les Anglaises pour rire* are vigorously mocked—their diet of *bifteck*, *rumsteck*, and other *viandes saignantes*, their prudery, and their dress. A verse may serve to amuse the reader.

A Paris va des Anglaises  
 L'air sec, avec  
 Des appas comm' des punaises  
 Des dents longu's et jaun's dans l'bec.  
 Sur l' boul'vard chacun' circule  
 Vêtu' comm' d'un foureau  
 D'un *macfarlan'* ridicule  
 Coiffé' d'un tout p'tit chapeau !

*All right! All right!*  
 Rien ne les emotionne;  
*All right! All right!*  
 Rien ne les passionne;  
 Ell's ont la sech'ress' d'un' planche,  
 Ell's ont aussi sa raideur,  
 Que c'soit la s'maine ou l'dimanche  
 Un rien offense leur pioudeur !

The chorus of this had almost as much success in France as the original enjoyed in England and the United States; and up to the present time, when a *gamin* wishes to jeer at a stray Englishman, he greets him with the

"All right!" which, together with "Aôh yes!" is regarded in France as the shibboleth of the Anglo-Saxon race.

As might be expected, *Tarara-boom-de-ay* exactly suited the *Anglaisistes*. It had scarcely appeared in England and America before a French rendering was rushed into print, in fact so rapidly that the author of it, M. Fabrice Lémon, failed to notice the exact title of the original and altered a syllable, his version bearing the name *Tha-mara-boum-di-hé*; but it was a great success, being sung at one and the same time at four of the principal *cafés concerts*—the Alcazar, the Horloge, the Ambassadeurs, and the Folies Bergère. Before, however, any French version at all had been made, the present writer, being in a provincial town in Normandy, read one day an announcement of the local theatre to the effect that on the following evening a new one-act play would be presented, with the remarkable title *Miss Kiss-my*, in which the forward manners of the typical *mees Anglaise* would be held up to the reprobation of a virtuous French audience. It was also announced as a special attraction that a certain Mlle. Dufort would, in the course of the play, sing the *célèbre chanson Anglaise*, *Tha-ra-ra-boum-der-é*. When the time came

and Mlle. Dufort appeared she had an immense audience. The first few lines made it evident (not to the audience, however) that this ingenious young woman had shrunk from the task of "getting up" the lines of the genuine version, but had instead constructed a set of verses of her own by piecing together all the English words she had ever heard. The first verse, then, ran something like this:

Ticket tramway clergyman  
Bifteck rumsteck rosbif van,  
Sandwich whitebaits lady lunch  
Chéri-gobler, wiskey-ponche;  
Aôh-yes all right shocking stop  
Pêl-êl why-not moton-chop,  
Plum-kêk miousic steamer boxe,  
Boule-dogue high-life five-o'clocks.  
Tha-ra-ra-boum-der-é, etc.

It was an immense success. The audience rose at her. They knew that the English was all right, because they themselves recognized a good many of the words. She had an ovation and nine encores; and this was probably the first rendition of the *célèbre chanson* on French soil.

It has already been noted that the French, in taking over the English popular songs, seldom or never translate the words literally.



The reason of this is very characteristic. In the first place, the French mind is too logically reasonable to relish mere nonsense such as delights with a childish joy a typical Anglo-Saxon audience. Possibly the Gallic lack of humor also stands in the way of an appreciation of pure absurdity. In the second place, the French have an innate literary instinct that demands precision, neatness of phrasing, and point, in even the lightest verses to which they are asked to listen; and the commonplaces of our sentimental ballads are to them indescribably inane. Hence in the lines that they write for our popular music there are to be found almost always a wit and a meaning to which the English words have no claim. Yet in another way the balance is in our favor; for an unpleasant French trait almost always mars their verses—the fondness for striking the note of the uncleanly suggestive. Our English words may be utterly nonsensical, their sentiment may be commonplace and its expression mawkish, yet both words and sentiment are clean and wholesome; the nonsense is good, honest nonsense, and one never carries away, after listening to it, an unpleasant taste; and this quality in our popular songs and popular singers is far better than all the tainted wit of a Dreyfus and a

Baneux, and the inspired *diablerie* of Yvette Guilbert and Duhamel. A good instance of how the French bedevil an innocent piece of fun can be seen by comparing the English popular song *Ting-a-ling* with the French version called *Ling-a-ling*, first sung by Edmée Lescot at the Casino de Paris. The English is a rollicking bit of harmless nonsense; but of the French version there is not a single stanza that I should venture to reprint.

There is one thing which seems quite remarkable in the popular songs of the French to-day, and which has a deep significance of its own. When we reflect upon the fact that France is now in reality a great armed camp, that its people are waiting with a feverish anxiety—an intense feeling of hope and fear—for the inevitable hour when they shall strike the great blow to avenge the humiliation of 1870; when one remembers how intensely martial is the spirit of the whole nation, how it is yearning for its old supremacy and for the glory that was dimmed at Gravelotte and Sedan, and at the same time recalls how effusive the French temperament is, it is simply marvellous to find the singers of the people's songs so silent on the one theme that lies closest to every patriotic Frenchman's heart. No ballads revile the

hated Prussian; no martial songs call for the hastening of the day of reckoning; no new Béranger puts into the lyrics of the street the fierce longing that throbs in the pulses of so many millions. This very silence, ominous, universal, is the most profoundly impressive evidence of the intensity of the flame that needs no outward fanning to keep it in a glow. "The shallows murmur, but the deeps are dumb"; and the underlying thought seems to be this: that to recall the horrors of 1870 would be humiliating, unbearable; while to sing of what all hope for in the future would be only to play the braggart's part in the face of possibilities that make the lightest spirit shrink back with awe from their contemplation.

I have said that there is scarcely a trace in any popular song of the spirit of *revanche*; yet here and there a word, a phrase, or a turn of expression reveals it as by a flash. One of the most striking illustrations of this, and perhaps the boldest, is found in the *Marche des Treize Jours*, a song that was sung all over France not very long ago. It is professedly only a comic song, narrating the amusing experiences of a *réserviste* who goes into camp to perform his thirteen days of required military service; but the last verse strikes a different note:

Quand les treiz' jours sont terminés  
 L'général nous dit : "J' vous r'mercie,  
 Vous êtes dign's de vos aînés!  
 A l'appel sacré de la Patrie  
     Tous vous viendrez  
 Et me direz :

"Les Treize Jours ne tremblent pas!  
 Pour repousser les hordes étrangères  
 Nous saurons tous dans les combats  
 Nous battr' comm' de vieux militaires!"  
 Puis nous montrant notre drapeau,  
 "Sachez mourir," dit-il, "pour sa défense!"  
 Et l'général élevant son chapeau,  
 Nous dit "À bientôt! Vive la France!"

There is a world of meaning to every Frenchman in that *à bientôt!*

Another of the recent popular songs in France is also very significant—this one not for its words, but for its music. It is a song that I have already mentioned—*Père la Victoire*—first sung by Paulus at the Eldorado in the winter of 1891-92. The words are nothing—the reverie of an old soldier—but the music, arranged by Louis Ganne for military bands, is in its way a wonderfully effective thing—a sort of cantata, whose meaning all France interpreted at once. It opens with a roll of drums and a trumpet-call, as heralding

the military character of its *motif*. Then comes a long strain of melancholy music, sombre, pathetic, rising almost into a wail, though still marked by the military accent. To the listener it depicts France in her humiliation, beaten to her knees by the merciless invader, betrayed, despairing. Then, as the music almost dies away, the muffled drums roll steadily, and a firmer note is struck. France lives! The years of patience, of sacrifice, of preparation have come. Stronger and clearer the music swells again into a noble march, majestic, confident, courageous. Clearer and bolder ring out the notes, faster and faster and richer and grander are the harmonies. France is once more herself, puissant, girt for battle, invincible. The hour has struck, and a storm of drums overwhelms the ear in a great crash of martial melody, with the trumpets once more ringing out, this time exultant in the fierce joy of victory! It is the musical apotheosis of *la revanche*. Professional musicians may call it a poor thing; but when rendered by a fine military band, as I have often heard it, it has always seemed to me inexpressibly thrilling; and with its hidden meanings it must quicken the pulse and stir the blood of every one who loves France and her chivalrous people.



THE NEW CHILD AND ITS PICTURE-  
BOOKS





## THE NEW CHILD AND ITS PICTURE-BOOKS

AN ingenious person of great eminence in educational theory, but one whose patience is evidently more highly developed than his sense of humor, has been making some experiments that are supposed to be very important to scientific teachers. He has found that it takes a young child  $\frac{3.54}{1000}$  of a second to recognize the letter *c*,  $\frac{3.58}{1000}$  of a second to recognize the letter *a*, and  $\frac{3.89}{1000}$  of a second to recognize the letter *t*; while the word *c-a-t* as a whole is recognized in  $\frac{3.39}{1000}$  of a second. Therefore, he says, all primary teaching should be done by words and not by letters, and the words should be  $\frac{1}{16}$  of an inch high and printed in a line not more than four inches long. One doesn't see exactly how he has discovered all these things, but that does not matter; for he is evidently a very profound person. I have done some figuring myself on the basis of his researches, and I find that, following out his

method and adopting his kind of reading-book, a child of five years, in an average daily lesson, would each day save  $\frac{9789}{10000}$  of a minute out of its valuable time. Think of that!

This investigation is beautifully illustrative of what is going on to-day in the sphere of education. We are living in an age in which the Educator has been gradually supplanted by the Educationist. The Educator was a person who felt that every child has its own individual temperament and mental idiosyncrasies which differentiate it to some extent from every other child, so that the method of presenting a subject should be largely influenced by the teacher's knowledge of the individual to be taught. He felt that a good teacher should be quick to note the effects upon each child's mind of a particular manner of presentation, and that the practical results obtained should be the final test of every method, inasmuch as the education of the child and not the exaltation of the teacher was the end to be secured. Hence quick sympathy, keen perception, ready adaptability, and ingenuity in fixing the attention and interesting the thought of the child were regarded as the prime qualifications of a successful Educator.

The Educationist has changed all that. So far as my own limited intelligence has been able to grasp the subtle distinction of modern pædagogic doctrine, an Educationist is an individual who is not himself much of a hand at teaching, but who is able to tell all other persons how they ought to teach. He is great on method, and observes blandly, when questioned, that it doesn't matter in the least whether the actual results amount to much so long as the correct pædagogic method has been employed. He abounds in statistics, and these statistics are usually in fractions. He perhaps could not himself succeed in teaching a young child to read, but, like the *c-a-t* investigator, he can tell you just how many thousandths of a second it ought to take for some one else to make a letter perceptible to the child's intelligence. He has read several textbooks on Psychology, and when he talks, he has a good deal to say about "concepts" and "apperception," and once in five minutes he will airily allude to the Laws of the Association of Ideas. He has, in fact, established a set of infallible formulas that never hang fire, and that render the education of children as simple a matter as rolling off a log. The exactness of these formulas is, indeed, a little

startling to an ordinary mind. Thus, if the Educationist tells you that a child of twelve years and six months who is studying Latin must have exactly thirty-five minutes of recitation each day (preferably between nine and eleven o'clock), and you say doubtfully that you have been giving thirty minutes to this work between eleven and twelve o'clock, the Educationist will look at you with a pained surprise and tell you that you are evidently quite old fashioned. Then it would be wise to keep quiet unless you want to get into trouble; for if you go on to say that your arrangement has worked very well, he will at once remark that you evidently know nothing of the Psychological Basis of Education; and if you still persist, he will talk to you about Sturm, and Herbart, and maybe even Fröbel; and if he once pulls Fröbel on you, you are gone. It is quite unsafe, too, for you to comfort yourself with the thought that perhaps he doesn't know what he is talking about. You may think that he is by no means brilliant in his ordinary conversation, that he seems, in fact, in other matters to be rather dull; and if you are exceptionally uninstructed and indiscreet, you may even go so far as to remark that he is evidently a good deal of an ass.

But just wait, and Nemesis will at last get after you. Some day or other you will see the Educationist reading a paper at a Teachers' Conference, and then you will know that he is really Great.

Now, so far as we are personally concerned, we don't care how much he goes raiding around in the field of education, and we shouldn't say a word about him if he stopped right there. Children will tumble up somehow or other even under the rule of an Educationist ; and after all, the real training of every human being comes largely from experience and from contact with his kind. Moreover, there is something to be said in behalf of the psychological racket. In these days of overcrowded professions there are hundreds of shallow young men and rattle-pated young women who would have to carry a hod or go and get married if a wise dispensation of Providence had not specially opened up to them this new and fruitful field, wherein they can earn comfortable salaries and much *κῶδος* without needing to possess anything more in the way of equipment than a few catchwords and the ability to keep a straight face when they hear each other talk.

Unfortunately, however, these people have

not remained contented with their original sphere of influence. Perhaps they are getting to be so numerous that they have begun to tread upon each other's heels. At any rate, they are now slopping over into another field, in which they are doing and will continue to do an infinite deal of harm. After grabbing the schools and coercing the teachers, they are now reaching out into the nursery and into the playground, and are seeking to upset all the good old traditions of child-life that have come down from the time when the Aryan children romped around on the borders of Volhynia.

We can all remember the golden days of our early life, when no hard-and-fast line had yet been drawn for us between the real and the impossible, and when everything was wonderful because everything was new. That was the roseate time when we knew that at the base of every rainbow there lay buried a pot of real gold. We heard fairies whispering in the thickets of the woods, and could point out the hillocks where gnomes came up each night and gamboled in the moonlight. Then all of us dreamed rare dreams and cherished harmlessly delightful fancies; for the gray old world was very beautiful, and our lives were flushed

with the light that dies away so soon. There were no Educationists in that paradise to which so many men and women, now grown grim and mirthless, sometimes look back with an unwonted dimness of the eyes. But to-day appears the brisk and practical Young Person of nineteen or thereabouts, fresh from a Training College and with no illusions and no sympathies about her. She bursts in upon the penitentialia of childhood, and knocks its household gods to smithereens. Fairy stories? Nonsense! Giants? Bosh! With a ruthless efficiency she annihilates the gentle friends of the child's imagination, deposes Santa Claus, mocks at the virtues of the Wishbone, and drives with jeers the Sand Man out of existence. Then she gets down to work and trots out her own substitutes for all these things. The children must begin to absorb some scraps of history; they must draw geometrical figures instead of rings for "migs." No more singing at their play of the disaster that befell London Bridge, or of the Farmer who stamps his foot and claps his hands and turns around to view the land. "Eeny-meeny-mony-mike" is silly gibberish. "Monkey, monkey, barrel of beer" is low. None of this for the wise young lady who now runs things! She will teach her

flock some real instructive and improving songs, about minerals, for instance, and when she takes them out to walk she will make them peep and botanize with her in a way to give Linnæus myelitis. Then the little things, instead of playing around in God's free air and in a healthily unconscious way, are thrust into a kindergarten, where they sit and make worsted parallelograms on a piece of cardboard, and learn a sort of complicated drill that keeps them unnaturally alert ; while through the whole performance they are watched and egged on to emulation until their little faces flush and all their sensitive little nerves are tingling with unhealthy excitement. They learn some things ; but what they learn is valueless, while what they lose in learning it is beyond all price. At times, perhaps, some mother whose mind is troubled by these new works and ways will timidly suggest her doubts about the wisdom of it all ; but the brisk Young Person will promptly and rather patronizingly inform her that it rests upon a Psychological Basis, and that it is just what Frœbel meant. And so we see growing up about us a generation of shrill, self-conscious, and insufferably priggish brats.

This strain of thought is always started by the sight of the children's picture-books that



every year load down the counters of the book-shops in anticipation of the holidays; for the Educationist has not yet abolished Christmas, probably because he requires a short vacation himself, in which he can go off somewhere and think. But he has done what he could by issuing a ukase (which has probably a Psychological Basis, too) as to the sort of picture-books that children should be allowed to see. No more of those demoralizing and quite absurd old stories of which both text and pictures have wrought such a havoc in the past! Why, they can be proved to be filled with falsehood. Take the pernicious tale called *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Everybody knows that beans could never grow to such a height as this story represents, nor if they did, would human life be possible at such an altitude. And as for the Giant—why, it is a well-known anthropological fact that there are no giants. See Quatrefages and Schwartz. Then the story goes on to speak of a talking harp and a hen that lays golden eggs. What glaring improbabilities! An inanimate object like a harp cannot possibly possess phonological attributes; automatic sounds of any kind would be out of the question. And as for the hen—no treatise on ornithology ever includes among the ova of

gallinaceous bipeds any such phenomenon. In a word, these things being easily demonstrated to be absolutely false and without any foundation in fact, will any one seriously advise that children should be allowed to hear of them? Would you have them grow up to manhood and womanhood believing in magic beans, and talking harps, and giants? The thing is pedægogically unsound and psychologically monstrous! No! if children must have anything so frivolous as a picture-book for mere amusement (a thing to be deplored), let them at least have books that may indirectly familiarize them with the world as it is, and not with unrealities like talking harps and aureous eggs. Let us through the eye give them some knowledge of zoölogical truths, and let these be depicted in a way to soothe and to tranquillize rather than to stimulate an unhealthy imagination. Finally, these picture-books in primary colors are wholly inartistic, and check the æsthetic development of a child's mind. Give us rather drawings in delicate outline and permeated by the influence of Art.

These notions have gradually been instilled into the minds of fathers and mothers, and have finally filtered through to the minds of publishers as well, so that at last one finds

everywhere the sort of picture-book for which the Educationist cries out. They are roughly to be divided into two classes—the animal picture-book and the purely artistic picture-book.

The animal picture-book is not a picture-book of the old kind, in which animals are the protagonists of tragedies and comedies. There is no story in the new picture-book, but just animals—principally cows. One doesn't quite see how it is that cows are supposed to be most fitted for the contemplation of the New Child. Perhaps the calm of the cow, her unimaginative turn of mind, and her thoughtful nature make her psychologically safe; but anyhow there she is, occupying whole pages of a hundred picture-books. First you see the cow in the foreground gazing in profile over a fence; then you see the same cow in the middle distance looking around for something to eat; last you see the cow in the background with her hind legs carefully foreshortened and doing nothing in particular. *Toujours* cow. The drawing is very carefully done; the cow's *chiaroscuro* is excellent. The disposition of the tail is always carefully thought out with reference to the general scheme of composition. But the Old Child would want to know what

it all meant; and when told that it had no meaning, no insidious story, he would have thought that there was just a little too much cow; and the perfection of the *chiaroscuro* would not wholly fill the void caused by the absence of meaning and of story. What the New Child thinks of it I personally do not know.

Next to the cow, the pig is greatly favored by the makers of these picture-books. Now the pig is all right. He has played an honorable and even an exciting part in the child's books of the past, from the Little Pig who went to market to the other Little Pig who built him a house out of straw against which the Wolf huffed and puffed till he blew it down; and the far more fortunate Little Pig who fooled the Wolf and finally scalded him to death in a big kettle. But the latter-day pig is not a pig of that kind. He is just a plain pig with no mind, a pig who has had no adventures, a pig about whose life there is no dark mystery, no tragedy, and no triumph—in fact, an ordinary pig with as little imagination as an Educationist.

The purely artistic picture-book is different in subject. Its style of picture is very well exemplified in the designs which that very clever

artist, Miss Ethel Reed, occasionally draws for children's books. Miss Reed's designs usually show a female face sometimes looking to the right and sometimes looking to the left and sometimes looking at the reader. There is a flurry of buds and leaves and butterflies and other small *hors d'œuvres* gracefully disposed about the figure, and that is all. It is very artistic and daintily drawn; but again the Old Child would ask, "What is it all about?" And the answer would have to be that it isn't about anything. The present writer received rather a shock the other day when he spoke to a friend about this matter, and said that he thought that a child could hardly find much to interest him in such drawings as those of Miss Reed.

"Why," cried my friend, "you're entirely mistaken! My little girl is so fascinated by these pictures that she carries the book to bed with her at night!"

Here was a blow that made me gasp. No one likes to have his theories upset in this way.

"Yes," he went on, "she looks at them by the hour, and insists on my making up a story about each one."

*O veritas sanctissima!* Here was confirmation strong as holy writ! So the New Child is not so very different from the Old Child,

after all. The Story is still the thing, and all that the Educationist has yet accomplished is to throw the burden of providing it on the parent instead of on the author!

It is in this latter fact that one descries some hope of ultimately returning sanity. When the overworked parent begins to realize that the child is going to have the story just the same as ever, he will also begin to reflect that it might just as well be told in the book as extracted from his own inexperienced fancy; that Nature is still a good deal stronger than Art; that though the Educationist may temporarily pitch her out with a psychological dung-fork, she will steal in again through the back door as irrepressible as ever; and that, granting the necessity of the Story, there will never be any stories like those fine old tales that have defied the tooth of time and will defy the dogmas even of the all-wise Educationist. Then will Jack the Giant Killer stand forth once more in his great nursery epic; and Little Red Riding Hood, whose story has all the subtle elements of a Greek drama, will come again into her own; and Blue Beard will be heard still thundering at the foot of the tower while Sister Anne waves her signal to the rescuers.

One argument against these books deserves some little serious consideration, because, on the face of it, it is not devoid of plausibility. It is asserted that the scenes of killing and wounding and battle and slaughter in which some of them abound are unduly horrifying to the sensitive mind of a child; that they will frighten and excite and alarm, and are therefore unwholesome in their effect upon the mind and nerves. But this assertion only goes to show how little, with all his vaunted psychology, the Educationist really knows about the nature of a child's mind. He ascribes to the child, in fact, attributes that are impossible without an experience which no child can possibly possess. Thus, for example, when you tell the Educationist how Jack drew his sword and decapitated the Two Headed Giant, he, being a grown man with a knowledge of physiological facts, can conjure up the horrors of an actual killing—the gushing blood, the shriek of agony, the monstrous body swaying and falling, and the inevitableness and finality of death. But what does the child know of all this? To it the cutting off of the head is not in itself more startling than the taking off of a hat. Of course, it is rather uncomfortable for a Giant to be without any head; but he is

a bad old Giant anyway and deserves some little annoyance of this sort for stealing the poor people's pigs and cattle. If he should repent, however, there is no reason why his head should not be clapped on again all right and be as good as new, just as when the Maid was in the Garden hanging out the Clothes and her nose was carried off by a predatory blackbird, it wasn't long before little Jenny Wren came and satisfactorily replaced it. To the child's simple faith everything is possible; it knows as little of anatomy as of antiseptic surgery; and its imagination, however active and daring, is necessarily circumscribed and conditioned by the limitations of its knowledge. Consequently, just as young David Copperfield read of Tom Jones and Humphrey Clinker and found them harmless creatures because his own mind had not yet eaten of the tree of life that gives a knowledge of good and evil, so to the child in the nursery, the combats and wild scenes of the story-book are as innocent as summer picnics.

It is perhaps permissible to think that when the present fad for over-refining the processes of children's education has been dropped, when the Psychological Basis has been laid comfortably to rest, and when we all go back to a



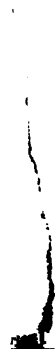
simpler and more natural way of looking at these things, the child's picture-book will be found to have been modified in only one respect by reason of this pow-wow. It is likely that the pictures themselves, while keeping to the old themes, or to themes that are not different in general spirit, will be more artistic in their execution, and that is all. Then we shall have a quite ideal picture-book—one whose illustrations will suggest the story that lies behind them, and at the same time will deserve respect for the adequacy of their execution.

There must be in the ideal illustrative imagination and insight, originality and felicity of execution; and there should also be a subtle touch of humor unobtrusively suggested—the sort of underlying humor always present in a child's mind when it is playing robbers, for instance, or anything else that is purely make-believe, and which is quite consistent with the greatest external gravity and apparent faith in the little drama. It is, in fact, the sub-consciousness of the fiction as a fiction, the duality of the thought, the underlying knowledge that the play is really nothing but a play, that so tickles a child's fancy and gives to the whole thing its greatest zest. Hence

the ideal pictures for a child will always manage to suggest this very feeling, will make you know that the artist is himself within the charmed circle, that he is playing with the children and making believe as hard as they are; and all the while you must be conscious that his eyes, like theirs, have just a glint of fun in them, just the suspicion of a twinkle that shows how well he understands the rules of the game. Moreover, each picture must inevitably make you feel that there is a story behind it, and must excite in the mind of the child who sees it a strong desire to know just what that story is.

Let us live, therefore, in the hope that ere long there will come to children a glorious Renaissance of the Natural, when they will no more be fed with formulas and made to learn so many improving things. Childhood is short enough at the very best; the dreams of children vanish all too soon; the facts of life confront them grimly even while the baby look still lingers in their eyes; and surely he is no real lover of his kind who would begrudge them this one small corner of delight and enter in with sullen tread to mar the heaven that lies about us in our infancy.

## **AMERICAN FEELING TOWARDS ENGLAND**



## AMERICAN FEELING TOWARDS ENGLAND

THE Venezuelan complication of a year ago quite naturally called forth a swarm of articles in the newspapers and in the magazines. In this country such published discussion was, in general, pretty closely confined to the merits of the question immediately at issue, but in England it took a much wider range, and appeared to centre very largely around the general subject of American feeling towards England, as to which the English seem of late to feel an unusual curiosity. For many weeks it was impossible to take up an English periodical without finding either an elaborate article or at least a long paragraph devoted to more or less exoteric speculation upon this rather interesting topic. The writers in every case, however, were Englishmen, and, in consequence, no very satisfactory and convincing analysis appeared; for the subject is one with which no Englishman, from the nature of the case, is competent to deal, because such knowl-

edge as Englishmen possess, or think they possess, is necessarily derived from their reading of our newspapers or from their own very superficial acquaintance with a very limited portion of our population. Even Mr. Goldwin Smith, who has spent a good portion of his life in and near the United States, cannot be accepted as a safe guide ; for while he doubtless knows many Americans, and has heard and read much that is published here, he cannot have come closely into contact with the great mass of the American people, with whose point of view alone this discussion has to do. The real feeling of a nation, especially of a nation like our own, is not to be gleaned from the highly-colored pronouncements of a sensational press, nor, on the other hand, from the after-dinner chat of a tactful and hospitable entertainer, who for the moment lets his personal liking for a distinguished guest inspire him with a purely cenatory cordiality towards the nation whom that guest for the moment typifies. Hence it is that whatever has been published in England gives only an outsider's view, which is hostile or friendly, according to the writer's own limited and personal observations, and in many cases, also, according to the spirit in which his investigation has been conducted.

Two letters, however, published in two English journals are really worth remembering. Each very fairly represents one of the two general opinions held in England of America and American sentiment, and, taken together, they may serve as a text for the consideration of a very interesting question.

The first is a letter written to the *London Times* by Dr. Conan Doyle. Dr. Doyle has lately visited the United States. He has met many Americans, both in public and in the apparently confidential intercourse of private life, and he doubtless thinks that he is very well qualified to expound the national sentiment of our people towards his own country. Dr. Doyle believes that there is a good deal of hostility towards England, though not towards Englishmen; and he regards this feeling as a sort of tradition, an historic survival from the past, and not as anything very definite, very specific, or very reasonable. He points out that in American schools the portions of American history most carefully studied are those that treat of our two great struggles with England, and he expresses the opinion that by continually dwelling upon the events of the Revolutionary War and of the War of 1812 American youth are trained up to regard England as

a sort of hereditary foe, towards whom it is both proper and patriotic to express and actually to feel a certain amount of rather vague hostility which could not, however, be justified by the facts of the present day. Dr. Doyle is good enough himself to speak with much friendliness of the American people, and to express his belief that such bitterness as survives from the past will die away as the two nations grow more and more to realize their community of interest, and to know each other better. In short, his view is that of the modern Liberal—well meaning, anxious to be just and fair, and fully convinced that he is perfectly familiar with all sides of a by no means complicated question.

The other letter appeared in the *Saturday Review* and bore the signature of Mr. Morley Roberts, a rather obscure young English writer. This document is considerably shorter than Dr. Doyle's and far more snappy in its diction. It was called forth primarily by the appeal of the English authors to their American brethren—an appeal which Mr. Roberts very indignantly repudiates. Having done this, he goes on to set forth some notions of his own. He regards Americans as distinctly and bitterly hostile to England and to Englishmen. He



asserts that we are "rancorous," and he very frankly says that this feeling is most heartily reciprocated in England. The concluding paragraphs of his letter deserve to be quoted in full:

"No Englishman with imperial instincts can look with anything but contempt on the Monroe Doctrine. The English, and not the inhabitants of the United States, are the greatest power in the two Americas; and no dog of a Republic can open its mouth to bark without our good leave. Personally, I look forward to a time when a social and political revolt shall tear the heterogeneous plutocratic fabric of the States to fragments, and then the more truly democratic England may come by her heritage.

"Those who sign this precious paper go on to say that we are proud of the United States. Sir, we *might* be proud of them; but to say that we *are* proud of them is to speak most disingenuously. Who can be proud of a politically corrupt and financially rotten country, with no more than a poor minority vainly striving for health? . . .

"If literature is the only bond between us and this most ill-mannered country, it may be time for us to repudiate American copyright before the Americans repudiate it. But literature is no real bond, because not one American in a thousand—no, not one in ten thousand—has had his manners made less brutal by the most casual acquaintance with it. For these reasons I wish to dissociate myself from an appeal to any country, and more particularly to the United States."

Mr. Roberts's delightfully frank and evidently honest letter represents the deliberate opinion of the High Tory, and one that is held in its extreme form by many Englishmen who are not Tories. In a less degree, I think, it is held also by a majority, if not of all Englishmen, at least of all the Englishmen who count.

Both the views expressed in these letters are clearly wrong—Dr. Doyle's because it mistakes both the cause and the direction of such unfriendly sentiment towards England as exists in the United States; and Mr. Roberts's, because it so immensely exaggerates the extent and nature of that sentiment. It is not true, as Dr. Doyle thinks, that Americans still cherish any feeling that was an inheritance from our early struggles with England. What he says would have seemed reasonable in the forties, when, as Mr. Howells has narrated in his *Boy's Town*, the American school-boy was taught to regard the "Bridish" as a blood-thirsty and relentless foe, to be classed with the devil and all his works. There were many men then living who had a keen personal recollection of the massacres at Tappan and in the Wyoming Valley, who had themselves experienced the loathsome horrors of the Eng-

lish prison-ships, or had later seen the nation's Capitol in flames. But that generation has now passed away, and with them the reality of these experiences. Americans are not much given to living in the past; and if they now recall the memory of these two wars, it is because they regard them as picturesque episodes in our national history, and not at all because the recollection feeds fat an ancient grudge. In fact, we can all now contemplate the records of 1776 and 1812 with a good deal of complacency; for in the first war the colonies distinctly triumphed over the mother country, while the second conflict ended in the tacit abandonment by England of the right of search whose enforcement had brought about the struggle.

It is a pity, then, that no adequate expression of American feeling towards England has yet been written down by an American, because such an utterance would greatly enlighten the English mind in its present condition of uncertainty, and would be valuable also as a corrective to much of the loose talk that is heard in this country on the political stump and in the columns of the political newspaper.

What is the real feeling that Americans en-

tertain towards England? And when we say Americans, we do not, on the one hand, mean the politicians, who are mere reeds shaken by the wind, and who study the popular feeling so intently as to lose all sense of perspective, and therefore fail to see the wood by reason of the trees. Nor do we mean those persons who are Americans by act of the courts rather than by right of birth—Americans upon whose papers of naturalization the ink is scarcely dry, and in whom still smoulders the memory of Old World feuds. And, on the other hand, one does not mean those despicable curs of native birth, who may be heard from time to time yelping at their country in foreign clubs and the smoking-rooms of transatlantic steamers, and who are thrilled with delight down to the very depths of their infinitesimal little souls when some fatuous foreigner tells them that he “really would never have taken them to be Americans!” We mean, rather, that great silent mass of our countrymen whose nationality is inherited from many generations of Anglo-Saxon ancestors, and who have learned their Americanism at their father’s fireside and not from the scare-heads of a newspaper—men who have no political ambitions up their sleeve, and who do not rush

into print, but who stand for sobriety and sense, and whose matured opinion, in the long run, makes and unmakes Presidents and Senates, and bends the government's whole policy to its silent will. How do these men feel towards England, the home of their race and the source of the great stream of our national traditions?

It is told of Charles Dickens, that on his second visit to this country he fell into conversation with an American upon this very subject; and finally, with that peculiar sort of tact which so many Englishmen possess, he remarked:

"Oh, as far as we are concerned, it's perfectly simple, you know. We all of us love Americans, but we hate America."

To which the American is said to have replied, rather slowly:

"Well, with us it's just the other way: we all of us love England—but we hate Englishmen."

There is a great deal of truth packed away in this sentence, though it needs a certain amount of exegetical commentary which is perhaps most easily conveyed in an allegorical form. The English nation is a good deal like the elder brother in the regulation British novel, who in due time, by right of primogeni-

ture, succeeds to the ancestral estates and the family mansion. We Americans, on the other hand, represent the younger brother who inherits nothing, and who if he remains at home must do so as the mere dependent of the heir. The old home is very dear to him. . It has always been his home as truly as his brother's. He knows every nook and corner of the park, every tree in the woodlands, every leaf of the lustrous ivy on the towers. To leave it all is inexpressibly hard. Yet he is not of a stock that takes kindly to dependence; and so at last he tears himself away with a hearty good-bye to his brother, and the suspicion of a tear in his eye for the old days that are over; and going out into a new land in a new world, he begins the fight for fortune. He battles with the forces of nature, and overcomes them; he subdues the forest, the wild beast, and the savage, and makes a new home for himself by his indomitable energy and courage and perseverance. Years go on, and at last he hews out a fortune also. Everything prospers, and he grows richer and richer, until finally his wildest dreams are realized; and then his first thought is once more to visit the home of his childhood. He crosses the sea, a man strong and successful, one who has lived the large, free life of the

New World, and he hurries along over the well-known roads with a heart full of generous emotion, dreaming in his simplicity of a royal welcome from the brother whom he left behind so long ago, and towards whom his very soul goes out in his love for home and kindred. And when at last he rushes into his presence with all this pent-up enthusiasm ready to overflow, and with the breezy breath of a thousand leagues of sea about him, he finds the brother whom he had so longed for, a stiff, smug, decorous, and frigid person, who looks him over a little curiously, who gives him a couple of fingers to shake, and who asks him in rather a languid way whether he is going to stay all night! The enthusiasm is killed in an instant; and when he finds that his elder regards him with a certain supercilious disdain, as one who has evidently lost, in the outlandish countries where he has lived, all traces of his early breeding—one whose very success has made him a little vulgar—then perhaps the younger brother swears a little to himself, and would rather like to punch the other's head. But he never quite forgets the tie between them, and if his elder were in need, or if some stranger were to attack him, all these private grievances would be put away in an instant, and he

would stand by the head of his house with both purse and power to the very last extremity.

And this is about the way it is with the American. He loves England with a fervor and a passion of which no Englishman has any conception. It means to his consciousness far more than it can mean to any Englishman. When he visits it his whole heart leaps at the first sight of the poppy-sprinkled meadows and the ivied walls of its sleepy old towns. It is his home; its history is his history; its glory is his glory too. But the people—that is another matter. It is not the memory of old-time wars that affects him. For these he cares no more than for the First Crusade. No Anglo-Saxon ever bears malice towards a former opponent in a good, square, stand-up fight. But when he finds his kindred in the old home looking at him with a sort of tolerant contempt, when he notes the ostentatious condescension of their manner, and the absurd assumption of superiority that is theirs, then he begins to think of things that happened in his own recollection; and when he does so think of them he waxes hot. He recalls how in the darkest period of our Civil War the English statesmen who had once posed as the friends of the United States greeted the news of our



disasters with mingled cheers and sneers; how they set their names to the list of those who pledged great sums of money to the support of our opponents; how amid bland assurances of ignorance they let slip from English ports the privateers that swept our vessels from the sea; how, when English ships were anchored beside our ships of war in neutral harbors their crews made night hideous with their insulting songs and cheers for the national enemy; how a great noble like Lord Hartington ostentatiously displayed a Confederate emblem at a gathering in New York, where he had been welcomed as a guest; how in a thousand ways the representatives of England gloated over our misfortunes and mocked at our successes. And if the American be a Southerner his feeling is not very different, for he knows now what he did not at the time so clearly see: that English sympathy with the South was wholly selfish and self-seeking; that it waned and died when the cause of the Confederacy grew hopeless; and that its only source was the desire to discredit and destroy the great Republic whose existence was a perpetual reproach to the pig-headed folly of an English king.

Yet it is probably not these public acts of

avowed ill-wishers that have most irritated American sentiment against Englishmen; it is rather the half-unconscious, blundering way in which the average Briton contrives, even in his clumsy attempts at civility, to reveal a mental attitude that reflects dislike and differentiation—an attitude which puts Americans into the place of “poor relations” to be asked, so to speak, to warmed-over dinners and the hashed mutton of courtesy; or that prompts him, when he visits this side of the Atlantic, to appear at an evening reception in a tweed suit. An anecdote told by General Badeau of President Grant’s visit to England will illustrate our meaning:

“At one manufacturing town he (General Grant) stayed at a house where every honor was paid him and every courtesy extended. But his hosts took him to visit the steward of a lord who lived near by. He was permitted to see the state apartments in the absence of his lordship, and he lunched in the land-steward’s room and not in the earl’s. The steward was probably an abler and better educated man than his master, and General Grant was too good a democrat not to appreciate this fact and to respect his host; but if he had been an English nobleman neither steward nor manufacturer would have dreamed of entertaining him.”

This was a trifling incident in itself, but it is

beautifully illustrative of the way in which the Englishman turns even his hospitality into a discourtesy by making it accentuate the low esteem in which he holds his guest.

There are times when even the most unemotional American who calls to mind such things as these, and who reads perhaps some bit of coarse abuse like that of Mr. Morley Roberts—there are times, I say, when he would exult in shouldering a rifle for a march over the Canadian frontier, and when he would see with joy the humiliation of England at the hand of the United States. Yet there never has come a time when he would wish to see that humiliation inflicted by any other hands. He would perhaps welcome a struggle, but it must be, so to speak, a purely family affair for the clearing up of scores that affect no other people—an affair to be settled by a fine piece of give-and-take fighting, with no ill-feeling as an aftermath. Whenever a foreign power attempts to put an affront on England, as the insolent young cub of a German Kaiser lately tried to do, the American feels as though he, too, had received a slap full in the face. And then, when the news is flashed across the sea that his English kinsmen have risen to resent the insult, united and unflinching in the face

of danger; when he hears that fleets are mobilized and that troops are rallying to their colors with the splendid efficiency that is the attribute of England in the hour of danger, then his whole heart goes out to them in a thrill of sympathy, and, putting aside the recollection of his former grievances, he would rather like to take a shot on his own account at the enemy whom, for the time being, he regards as an enemy of the entire race.

This, I think, is a fair expression of American sentiment towards England — a curious mingling of pride in the ancestral home with a very real dislike for much that Englishmen have done and are still doing. And this view of the case is one to be commended to the very careful consideration of the English; for it rests with them to say which of these two feelings shall in the end dominate and at last obliterate the other. Should they go on exercising their peculiar gift of making enemies, the hour for repentance may come and come too late. Some day, perhaps, when the meteor flag shall have been dimmed for the first time by the shadow of a great defeat, when the Battle of Dorking shall have been actually fought, and when the spiked helmets are swarming over the downs of Surrey in irresistible conver-

gence upon undefended London, even the most self-satisfied Englishmen may regret that of their own deliberate choice they killed in the hearts of the American people a feeling which to-day still lives, and which tells us that the prosperity and the greatness and the honor of England are in no small degree our own inheritance.



**PRESIDENT CLEVELAND**





## PRESIDENT CLEVELAND

WITH his retirement from the supreme executive office Mr. Cleveland's public life may be regarded as definitely ended. Our traditional and quite indefensible system, which gives no official rank to an ex-President, and therefore deprives the nation of the exceptional experience and the exceptionally impartial counsel of him who has passed through the great ordeal of administering the mightiest popular government known to the modern world, imposes upon Mr. Cleveland, as upon his predecessors, the dignified yet unfruitful obscurity of private station ; for with scarcely an exception, our American Presidents have felt that they owed it to the majesty of the office that was once their own, to listen to no ordinary call of public service, and to hold aloof from all the din and uproar of party strife. In consequence, Mr. Cleveland already belongs to history ; and even now the attempt is being made to assign to him and to his ad-

ministration their proper place in the annals of the American Republic.

That such an attempt is absurdly premature is so obvious as to need no argument. With the passion of partisanship still strong in the minds alike of those who fought against him and of those who battled with him, the sense of true historical perspective cannot possibly exist to-day ; and with the echoes of a great political battle still reverberating in the ear, no one can hear as yet the calm, clear voice that ultimately stills all others as it pronounces the final verdict of a nation's history.

But though it is too soon to weigh the policies and to judge the measures that are now inseparably linked with the story of Mr. Cleveland's public life, or to pretend to know how beneficial or how harmful is to be their influence upon the political welfare of the American people, it is, nevertheless, perhaps by no means an impossible task for one outside the range of purely partisan activity to form some sort of tentative opinion of the man himself as an administrator and as a party leader ; for, putting aside the merits of the ends that he has aimed to reach, the manner in which he has pursued them is wholly a matter of recorded fact, and in no respect a matter of

opinion; and it surely may even now be viewed with reasonable impartiality as a very interesting political and personal study.

For some cause or other, Americans have always found a peculiar pleasure in dwelling upon the striking contrasts that are so abundant in the lives of their public men. To recall in the presence of a stately Senator the fact that he was once a bobbin-boy; to see in the victorious general a whilom tanner or grocer's clerk; and to look back of the President seated in the simple chair that serves him as a very real throne from which to direct the destinies of seventy millions of people, and remember the rail-splitter or canal-boatman of twenty or thirty years ago, seems to titillate agreeably a certain almost universal instinct. Perhaps this feeling is a part of the national irreverence; or perhaps it is only a manifestation of the national sense of humor which finds an especial piquancy in vivid contrasts; or perhaps again, at bottom, it rests in some subtle way upon an intensely American admiration for the nerve, the capacity, and the "gumption" that enable some men to fight their way up from obscurity against tremendous odds and to wrest a brilliant success from the reluctant hand of Destiny. However this may

be, the career of Mr. Cleveland is perhaps more full of startling contrasts, of striking anomalies, and of unexpected paradoxes, than can be found in the history of any other of our Presidents. No American in public life has ever experienced more rapid and astonishing turns of fortune; no man has raised and faced and fought so many deep-rooted political and personal prejudices; no man has broken through so many thoroughly established political traditions.

Of all our American Presidents there are four who stand out conspicuously above the rest as representing four distinct types, each very characteristic and very national, and each differing essentially from the other three. In Washington we see the highest type of the colonial American, developed wholly under the influence of English traditions. Washington is, in fact, in his tone and temper, his point of view and his ideals, the representative upon American soil of the English gentleman and statesman, though with a difference that makes him *au fond* entirely American; and his immediate successors in the Presidency did not very far depart from the standards that were his. Even Jefferson, with all his radicalism, must be grouped in the same class, for, as is

the case with most Americans, his radicalism, startling as it seemed to the Federalists of his time, was only superficial; and when one thinks of him as strolling through the stately halls of Monticello, a landed proprietor, his cellars stored with rare old wines, his library filled with the choicest books, patronizing the arts and sciences, and having his wants supplied by a retinue of slaves, he is readily seen to have been the true patrician whose democracy was in large part an intellectual assumption, just as the political theories of the great Whig dukes in England are found, upon analysis, to differ in no fundamental point from the conservatism of the Tory magnates. Jackson was the first New Man to arise in our government's history; and he represents the rough frontiersman, the fighter, the man who faced both nature and the savage in a successful battle for the mastery of the West. His election marks an epoch in our history, a break in the traditions that bound us closely to English influence; and he is the first of the American Presidents to stand firmly and almost fiercely upon the rock of national individuality. Lincoln, again, is still another type—the type of the Western provincial, a later growth than the frontiersman, with some of the frontiersman's traits, but more subtle,

more open to new influences, more closely in touch with the resources of an older civilization, much more a man of thought and somewhat less a man of action.

Mr. Cleveland, when he first became known to the nation at the time of his candidacy for the governorship of New York in 1882, typified a fourth and a still different kind of personality. In him was seen the modern American who lives in cities and represents a stratum of the population that is every year becoming more and more numerous with the increase of the urban element. He was a type of the practical, every-day, usual citizen of moderate means and no very marked ambitions—a blend of the business man and the small professional person, one who knocks about with his fellows in a give-and-take sort of way, blunt, hard-headed, having a good digestion and a brusque, unimaginative readiness to take a hand in whatever is going on. His education was of the simplest, his general information and reading presumably of the scantiest, and his interest in life was pretty nearly bounded by the limits of the city of Buffalo. As a practising lawyer he appeared in the local courts, and, though well thought of by his fellow-lawyers, and though at times intrusted with the conduct

of cases of considerable importance, he was not known beyond the local circuit. A bachelor, he had no need of a large income. His spare time was spent with cronies of his own kind. His recreation was derived largely from the intricacies of the game of pinochle, played in the comfortable back room of a beer-garden; and perhaps this circumstance is in itself enough to give a fair idea of his general environment. When the eventful convention was held that nominated him for the governorship, Mr. Cleveland took charge of his own canvass in person, sitting all through the sultry summer day in a small bedroom of his hotel, with a tub of cracked ice and innumerable bottles beside him, conferring with his cronies, receiving visits from country delegates, and by a sort of professional joviality bidding for the favor of that interesting class of politicians whom his chief advocate in recent years has generically described as Boys.

Elected Governor by an unprecedented majority, owing to bitter dissensions in the opposing party, Mr. Cleveland entered upon a wider field and one that must have seemed at first a post of limitless exactions. But his lack of imagination stood him in good stead. He bent his back to the load and did each day's work

as it came. Unused to large responsibilities, unable as yet to discriminate between the duties that are executive and the duties that are purely clerical, and retaining all the fussiness of the provincial business man, he viewed all questions as equally important, attending personally to all his correspondence, insisting upon examining for himself every item and detail of the executive routine, and giving hours of his time each day to the minutiae that the merest clerk could have attended to with quite as much efficiency. But this was, after all, a manifestation of the conscientiousness that showed itself far more commendably in higher matters. The rough, blunt independence of the man and his unimaginative turn of mind made him indifferent to the insidious influences that rise like a malarial mist about the possessor of high political office. Mere subtleties of suggestion were lost on this brusque Buffalonian, and anything more pointed than suggestion roused in him a sort of cross-grained spirit of opposition that brooked no guidance. Suave, astute, and wily leaders of the party, like Mr. Tilden, who had expected to find the inexperienced country politician a ready instrument in their hands, were aghast to see him forging along in his own way with a sort of bull-necked



stubbornness, clumsy and lumbering, yet with a power and energy which they had to recognize as very real. And the great body of the people, whose love for political independence is all the more intense because of the infrequency with which they ever have a chance to see it, applauded this burly, obstinate, tactless, but intensely earnest man. They laughed when the professional politicians were trampled on; and even the representatives of "labor," whom Mr. Cleveland calmly defied by his veto of a well-known bill, at heart respected him for his courage and his honesty.

Then came Mr. Cleveland's nomination to the Presidency, followed by the memorable campaign of 1884—that shameful contest in which personal scandal was belched forth by the writers and speakers of both parties, in which foul innuendo and filthy suggestion took the place of argument, and in which clergymen vied with the shouters of the stump in spreading abroad indecent charges, while even the graves of the dead were ransacked in search of fresh material for prurient pasquinades. Mr. Cleveland was still a bachelor, and the *condottieri* of the enemy thought him a fair target for every missile. It was the most extraordinary struggle that American political history

has ever seen—a wild debauch of slander, and one of which every decent citizen, Republican or Democrat, was afterwards ashamed; so that by a sort of tacit consent all subsequent campaigns have been fought out on purely public issues. Mr. Cleveland stood firm under the assaults upon his private character, though tempted into the writing of one very indiscreet and even foolish letter; and his general attitude was quite consistent with his reputation for frankness and sincerity. His terse telegram to a friend at the beginning of the onslaught furnished his partisans with a new slogan; so that "Tell the truth" became as popular a cry as "Burn this letter," though, as some one rather cynically remarked at the time, "neither was the letter burned nor was the truth all told."

The hopeless break in the Republican party caused by the nomination of Mr. Blaine, and the undoubted disloyalty to him of the Conkling faction in New York, gave the Presidency to Mr. Cleveland by a plurality of only a few hundred votes in a single State. The record of the past twelve years must still be fresh in the minds of even the youngest of our readers. Into the details of this eventful period we cannot go, but they are surely among the most

curious of any that our history affords. How this untrained, unlettered, provincial lawyer, this local politician, this heavy-handed, tactless, gruff Buffalonian drew to himself as his own personal following the most refined and highly-trained and finical men of the party that had always hated the very name of Democrat; how even those, like Mr. Lowell, who still remained his nominal opponents, spoke of his sincerity and single-mindedness with something like the fervor of enthusiasm; and how he made his own those views of government and economic policy that had long been viewed as suited only to the theorist and the doctrinaire; how he imposed them upon his own reluctant party, and for the first time in many decades saved it from a purely defensive attitude in the arena of national politics; how, though defeated for re-election, he was a third time nominated and then triumphantly elected over his formerly successful rival; how he came into power again with a united party and a great legislative majority behind him; how in a few short months he found himself without a loyal following; how he was finally compelled to give at least a moral support to the very man who represented the idea most thoroughly antagonistic to that with which

his own career is closely linked ; and how he at last went forth from office into private life after having been repudiated by his own party, which he left disorganized and divided—these are but a few of the many strange anomalies which the record of his administration presents. Yet even in his less important acts an equal amount of contradiction is apparent. That the man who in 1888 denounced the baleful influence of capital should end by standing forth as the chosen champion of capital ; that the President whose first official utterance proclaimed the unwisdom of a second term of office should himself become three times a candidate ; that the politician who uttered words of comfort to the Homestead rioters should have stretched the Presidential prerogative almost to the point of breaking in order to quell by military force an outbreak quite identical in origin ; that the strenuous advocate of an improved civil service should ever have put the machinery of appointment at the disposal of Mr. Eugene Higgins and Mr. Logan Carlisle ; and that the statesman whose alleged subserviency to England was for years a gibe with all his enemies should have hurled against Great Britain the most warlike message penned by any American President since the time of

Polk—all these things in their way are just as remarkable and just as paradoxical as any of the greater incidents of his career.

In forming an estimate of the place in history which Mr. Cleveland and his administration will ultimately occupy, a sharp distinction will have to be made between that side of him which is purely personal and that which belongs to the sphere of statesmanship. This distinction is one that has in general been overlooked in all the recently published analyses of his public services. It is, for example, impossible to deny that he has made a strong and ineffaceable impression upon the mind of the American people. It is equally impossible to deny that he has exemplified some of the most admirable traits that are demanded of the governing man; that he has been fearless, independent, honest, and sincere; that never for a moment has he bent his neck to the collar of a "boss"; that very seldom has he allowed any consideration of his own personal interest to move him; that he has been master of his official household in a sense that has been rarely true of any American Executive; that he and he alone, for good or for evil, has hewn out those results that must stand for all time as landmarks in the past twelve years of

American history. He has shown himself to be, as a man, one of the most distinctly individual characters of the time; and to him as to a President whose influence has been strongly felt, a place among the foremost must be given.

It is only when one comes to view his work as a statesman that opinions will very seriously differ; and until the present generation shall have passed away all such opinions will be utterly antipodal and quite irreconcilable. A public man may be all that Mr. Cleveland's warmest friends have claimed for him—vigorous, upright, forceful, and single-minded—and yet fall short of statesmanship. For a statesman, like a soldier and like an orator, must be finally and unsparingly judged solely by the measure of his success; and this is especially true of one who fills the responsible office of the American Executive. The function of the President under our system is most intensely practical. Vested with immense, and in many things with a more than monarchical power, answerable within the limits of his prerogative to no one, and knowing that prerogative to be not very accurately defined, armed with the thunderbolt of the veto power, having unlimited patronage at his command, and secure in the

tenure of his office for a period that cannot be abridged, the responsibility which rests upon him is correspondingly tremendous. He is at once the head of the State and the head of a party; and both the welfare of the State and the welfare of the party are committed to his single keeping. Before his election he has subscribed to a definite programme of national policy representing the matured convictions of his own judgment. He has adopted a political creed that is accepted by him and by the party whose leadership he holds as embodying the immediate necessities of the nation. And therefore, when elected, he is bound by every obligation of honor and of conscience to embody these same views and principles in the national legislation and administration.

Hence, the American President is not placed in office primarily to illustrate the higher ethical virtues, but to *do* things; so that his success or his failure depends almost entirely upon the manner in which these objects are accomplished. And in the discharge of the task, the true statesman will adapt his methods to the attainment of his ends, having a due regard to proportion, not exalting petty measures into the place of vital issues, nor enshrining whims and glorifying ephemeral fads, but keeping the

greater purpose steadily in view, and subordinating questions of detail and of temporary moment to the solemn pledges that he has given to the people. And in doing this he must work with such instruments as he has at hand and use to the full the powers that have been committed to his care. In the face of a great national emergency, he will not ultimately suffer in the estimation of the people if he even decline to look too closely at abstract theories of duty, or if he be not over nice in his use of the means at his disposal. This, to be sure, to the political purists, is something worse than heresy; but it is justified by the whole history of modern government: for had Elizabeth and Burleigh and Walsingham been political purists, England in the sixteenth century would have been overwhelmed by the Continental coalitions; had Cavour been a political purist, United Italy would have still remained the unsubstantial dream of a few poor visionaries; had Bismarck been a political purist, the German Empire would have slumbered for another century in the cave of Barbarossa. It is, no doubt, a hard saying that in the statesman, purity of motive, integrity of purpose, and the courage of conviction are not enough to confer enduring fame;



yet this is emphatically true : and history shows that merely negative results and excellent intentions can give no rank comparable with that which he attains who with wisdom, calmness, and the higher strength which does not bluster, conquers a complete success and leaves a mark upon the record of supreme achievement.

Judged, then, by such a test as this, it is very hard to see how Mr. Cleveland can ever find a place in the foremost line of American statesmen. It was, indeed, unfortunate for him that practically his whole preparation for the task of governing came to him in two short years while holding the chief executive office of the State of New York. For with his naturally arbitrary and self-sufficient temperament, this formed the worst possible sort of preparation for the presidency. In the first place, the Governor of New York, in his relation to the Legislature of the State, is more influential and more irresponsible than is the President of the United States in his relation to the national Congress. And the cause of this is obvious. The New York Legislature, like all our State assemblies of the sort, is composed chiefly of men who make no claim to national distinction, and whose ambitions are very limit-

ed and local. The public does not watch them as individuals. They make no figure in the popular mind. Consequently, their only thought is of the petty districts which they are supposed to represent, of the voters in their immediate vicinity, and of the interests of the section from which they come. Their activities are limited to getting through small bits of special legislation or to engineering a dicker with the representatives of opposing interests. To these men the Governor is politically omnipotent, for the loss of his favor means the hopeless blocking of their schemes. If, therefore, he is disposed to be arbitrary, self-sufficient, and impatient of advice, this is seldom resented, and there is really no appreciable check upon such tendencies, provided, as is frequently the case, his own party control the Legislature; and even if he be not already given to playing the dictator, the practical supremacy which he here enjoys will very likely make him so. It was in this office that Mr. Cleveland acquired such knowledge of administration on a large scale as he gained prior to his assumption of the presidential chair; and it was, we say, distinctly unfortunate that his experience should have been limited to this one sphere, in which all his natural prone-

ness to arrogance was fostered and intensified.

The downright aggressive and unconciliatory methods that he had made his own while Governor he carried with him to the national capital; and it may be assumed that they were in no wise modified by his consciousness of the extraordinary fortune that had made him the first Democratic President to be actually seated after the failures and mistakes of a quarter of a century. He doubtless felt that if disregard of personal and party ties, absolute reliance upon his own judgment, intolerance of the most friendly counsel, and an ill-suppressed contempt for the experience of his associates and followers could make him a successful Governor and lead him directly to the presidential chair, those same qualities were a good enough equipment for governing the nation.

And it was here that he made a great, and in some respects a fatal, mistake; for the conditions of government at Albany and at Washington are not the same; since Congress is a very different body in tone and in temper from the Legislature of a State. It is just now the fashion to decry the capacity and the character of the men who represent their States

in the Senate and the House, to profess to see in them only a collection of demagogues and log-rollers and "cranks"; but to bring against them so sweeping an indictment as this is in reality to attack the whole system under which the American people live. If a free, intelligent, and keen-sighted electorate does not or cannot choose for itself legislators who truly represent it, then, after more than a century of trial, republican government is proved to be a failure and its fundamental theory a falsehood and a sham. But as a matter of fact, while there are doubtless in both Houses of Congress men whose characters are soiled, men whose aims are sordid, men whose capacity is limited, and men whose views of the public service are perverted and even base, it is preposterous to assert that the great majority of them are anything but patriotic, conscientious, and sincere. Unlike the members of a local legislature, they are men who know that what they do is done in the public eye. They cherish a laudable ambition for future advancement. They have opinions of their own, and they feel the influence of other motives than those which actuate the obscure political ephemeridæ who flit across the scene at Albany, or Madison, or Little Rock. In their own

States they are men of standing and importance, and in the white light that beats upon the Capitol they are not to be led by the nose with a hook or lashed into a supine submission even when it is a President of their own party who cracks the whip. Hence, when Mr. Cleveland resumed at Washington the rôle that he had played so easily at Albany, he aroused at once in the minds even of his own partisans a very natural resentment which deepened with time into a feeling of the intensest personal dislike. His capacity for making unnecessary enemies is, indeed, one of the very strangest facts of his career; and it has proved fatal to the success of the two great policies that through both his terms of office have been the nearest to his heart. During his first administration, to be sure, while the Senate was still in the hands of his opponents, while the country had not even yet given an emphatic "mandate" to the Democratic Party, and while a return to power was still a novel and agreeable sensation, such dislike as was excited in that party by Mr. Cleveland's tactlessness found no loud public utterance. But when his second term began with both Houses of Congress safely Democratic, and with an immense popular majority behind them, the discontent

that had been slumbering so long broke forth in open opposition.

In a very able and almost convincing analysis of Mr. Cleveland's public life that has been lately published, and that is probably the work of Mr. E. L. Godkin, a practical admission of Mr. Cleveland's lack of tact is made; but it is asserted that, in the emergencies which confronted him, tact was not the quality most requisite; that stubborn courage was the one thing needful. In consequence, the case for Mr. Cleveland is made to rest upon the negative successes that he achieved in blocking measures which he held to be unwise. "Such work," says Mr. Godkin, "cannot be done by means of tact." Yet on the same page of the same issue of the journal in which this argument appears Mr. Godkin denounces the expiring Congress for the purely negative character of its work; and again and again has he dwelt upon the delight experienced by Senators and Representatives alike in defeating any measure that was known to have President Cleveland's personal approval. Why, then, were these things so, and of what, when taken together, are they significant?

In Mr. Cleveland's public career two great measures of national policy stand out as those

which he has always strongly pressed and with which his name is most distinctively associated. The first of these was a radical reform of the tariff upon a non-protective basis; and the second was such a modification of our financial system as would make that system unmistakably a system of gold monometallism. The reform of the tariff seemed to him so vital an issue that for its sake he incurred defeat at the polls in 1888; and his party frankly accepted his views and brought him back to office by a vast majority in 1892, after a campaign fought out upon this issue. His financial policy, which was thoroughly understood in this campaign, was also tacitly approved by his followers, for they nominated him with a full knowledge of his views and of his future action. Now, if his statesmanship is to be judged by anything at all, it surely may be judged by the manner in which he led his party in relation to these two vitally important measures. And what does the record show? With regard to the tariff, it shows that on coming into power after a successful contest decided on this very issue, with all the prestige that attends a party leader who has triumphed over political traditions, with a party pledged in its official utterances to the

policy of its chief, and with a great majority in Congress elected to carry out this pledge, the only result that was attained, after months of labor and debate, was a legislative measure so ludicrously unlike what had been promised, so inconsistent in its provisions, and so emasculated in principle, that Mr. Cleveland himself was ashamed to sign it, and allowed it to become a law without his signature. In the sphere of finance the story of his leadership is still more lamentable, for not only was no definite financial measure passed, but in the effort to accomplish something, the friction between the President and his party went beyond the stage of quiet opposition and blazed out into open revolt, so that the party itself was split into opposing factions until the majority, in absolute defiance of its chief, broke away from his leadership altogether, repudiated all his tenets, and in the Chicago Convention wrote a declaration of principles every line of which was like a slap full in the face of the President whom those same men had once triumphantly elected. Then we have the strange spectacle of Mr. Cleveland, in order to save his financial doctrines from the general wreck, throwing over all his economic theories and aiding, at least by indirection, the fortunes



of Mr. McKinley, his party's foe, a man whose name is linked with the most extreme of all the tariff legislation that Mr. Cleveland had for years denounced as robbery. If this be statesmanship, then statesmanship is but a synonym for anarchy.

The partisans of Mr. Cleveland have seen fit to throw the whole responsibility of this fiasco upon the Congress that thwarted and rejected his two policies. They say that in the face of such corruption, incompetence, ignorance, and personal malice as they think existed in both Houses, no President could have done what Mr. Cleveland tried to do. They say that this very opposition is only one more tribute to his political purity and uncompromising integrity of character. They "love him for the enemies that he has made," and describe his failure by the honorific name of "success in defeat." How, they ask, could he possibly prevail in the face of such a Congress? But this question is in reality an impeachment of his statesmanship. A great party leader must do his work with such instruments as he has at hand. A Congress gathered from all sections of the country will always represent conflicting interests, and it will always be filled with men discordant in their views and diffi-

cult of management. But every one knows this. This is the condition of the problem, the premise of party government, the accepted rule of the great political game. The mere politician will often shrink from the task, but the inspired statesman will master the difficulties, adapt his methods to his instruments, prevail by management, by tact, by judicious compromise, and in the end attain a lasting and complete success. When a party leader, after assuming the guidance of a great majority, and with all the power of the executive office at his disposal, dismembers his party, wrecks his own most cherished measures, and then cries out that he is not responsible, owing to the machinations of evil and malicious men, this is to plead the baby-act in its most preposterous form. And this is just where Mr. Cleveland's lack of tact assumes a critical importance. To go bellowing and snorting through the labyrinth of legislation like a political Minotaur, goring recklessly at every prejudice, butting into every possible obstacle, and trampling defiantly on every personal and political susceptibility, is perhaps courageous, picturesque, exhilarating, amusing, magnificent, anything else you please—but it is not statesmanship. When Mr. Cleveland's friends

disclose the list of Senators and Representatives who severed even their personal relations with him, and who rejoiced to hamper and defeat even those measures to which they were themselves by no means hostile, merely because in so defeating them they were defeating him, is not this in reality the strongest possible indictment of his administrative capacity? Is not the possession of a temperament that rouses incessant opposition and dislike as fatal a defect in a statesman as would be the possession of a club-foot in a professional athlete? As a matter of fact, the American President has infinite resources of conciliation if he but know how to use them: social influences, the prestige of his office, and, under our system, the enormous patronage whose use in winning congressional support is sanctioned by long custom. Mr. Cleveland himself is generally held to have employed this latter instrument in the contest which resulted in the repeal of the Sherman Silver Act; and in any case, the thought of its employment need not have excited any thrills of horror in a President who nominated Mr. James J. Van Alen to the Italian mission as a reward for pecuniary contributions to a campaign fund.

It is not likely that any one to-day will claim

that in political courage, personal honor, and high appreciation of public duty, President Lincoln was inferior to Mr. Cleveland; yet to recall the history of his administration is to recall that higher type of statesmanship which succeeds, as distinct from the spurious variety which fails. The problem of government as it confronted Mr. Lincoln was far more difficult than that which Mr. Cleveland had to meet. Elected by only a minority of the popular vote, unknown to many of his own party, with no executive experience whatever, mocked at by those who possessed the superficial polish which he lacked, taking office with a bankrupt treasury, a country divided and darkened by approaching war, with incompetence and inexperience everywhere conspicuous, he stood alone upon the threshold of an agonizing crisis, with scarcely one adviser on whose wisdom and devoted loyalty he could perfectly rely. Congress was full of faction: there were those fierce fanatics, the Macbriars and Mucklewraths of Abolitionism, panting for all that was extreme and violent, and looking upon the President as a Gallio whenever he held back from following their frantic lead. There were the War Democrats, patriotic and sincere, but timid, superstitiously shrinking

from anything that savored of extra-constitutional procedure, and reluctant to assent to it even in the exigencies of a struggle for national existence. There was also a small but venomous minority made up of those whose sympathies were really with the South, and who watched every move of the administration with sleepless vigilance, ready at an instant's notice to pounce upon its errors and discredit all its counsels. In the Cabinet itself the situation was, if anything, still more disheartening. The wily, adroit, and immensely able Seward, past-master of political intrigue, could not be expected all at once to show unqualified devotion to a President who had defeated him for the nomination that had been the great ambition of his life. Chase, as the letters published after his death most plainly show, was thoroughly disloyal, at first despising his chief, and always intriguing against him. A little later, and Stanton, a life-long Democrat, a man of violent and arbitrary will, prone to insubordination and arrogance, introduced into the President's official household another element of discord. Moreover, thousands of honest but unwisely impatient citizens were fretting at inevitable delay, heart-sick at the tidings of disaster that came thick

and fast with every bulletin, and ready to be convinced that the Head of the State was incompetent or frivolous or shallow. Add to this the fact that the passions of all men were inflamed to the highest pitch, that reason was stifled, that greed and jobbery and corruption, starting up in a night at the first breath of war, thrived rankly in every department of the government, and set their swarms of shameless satellites upon the President to beg and bluster and bedevil. From such a carnival of faction and folly the ablest and the purest might well have shrunk appalled; the wisest might have taken up the task and failed without discredit. But Lincoln, with that clear vision and that serenity of temper that never failed him, did not for one moment falter or complain. He mastered his Cabinet from the first, and insured at least its loyalty to the public service, if not to him; he compacted into an efficient legislative entity the inharmonious factions of the Congress, yielding a little here and giving a little there, conciliating opposition, gently disarming prejudice, always patient and kindly, but never for a moment losing sight of the one great end in view, until at last the fight was won and he stood forth the absolute master of his party, supreme, un-

challenged, and successful in that victory which was not his victory alone, but first of all his country's. And this was statesmanship.

Yet, if a study of Mr. Cleveland's two administrations should fail to prove his claim to the highest title given to the ruler of a great people, it still yields much that an American may view with quiet satisfaction. That one with little preparation for the task, one who was no student of public affairs, but who was taken almost at random from the mass of ordinary citizens, could still in two great administrative offices display no weakness, but maintain his personal independence; that he could hold his own and make a lasting impression upon the imaginations of his countrymen by his tenacity, his integrity, and his unflinching courage—this fact is one that is distinctly reassuring. Whatever mistakes he may have made, however far he may have fallen short of the highest ideals of statesmanship, his career still shows that the Anglo-Saxon capacity for government everywhere exists in our transplanted race; and so long as this is true, no thoughtful American need ever for one moment despair of the life or of the honor of the Great Republic.





## SOME NOTES ON POLITICAL ORATORY



## SOME NOTES ON POLITICAL ORATORY

THE recent Presidential nomination by one of the great political parties of a comparatively unknown man because of the impression produced upon the nominating convention by a bit of fervid oratory has, naturally enough, led to an immense amount of discussion as to the present condition and the future possibilities of political eloquence. For quite a number of years it has been taken for granted that the age of oratory has gone by forever; that the time when a brilliant speaker could dominate the minds of a great assemblage will never return; and that the remarkable masters of eloquence whose forensic efforts are as familiar as their names have left behind them no successors whatsoever. Even Professor Sears, in his admirable history of oratory, which is the latest contribution to the serious literature of the subject, speaks of the race of orators as to-day extinct.

The only difference of opinion that has been

manifested has shown itself in an attempt to explain just why great speeches are no longer made. One theory attributes it to a general decline of intellectual ability in our public men, to the tendencies that force into other fields than that of statesmanship the keenest and most brilliant minds of the rising generation, and to a universal drift towards the commonplace and conventional that is depriving modern life, both public and private, of its color and its old-time picturesqueness. The other hypothesis finds the cause in an assumed change that has come over the whole body of our people. We are told that men are more highly trained to-day than in the past; that they are intellectually more self-restrained and less impulsive; that they read more and think more for themselves; and that they are almost universally touched with a certain cynicism and sceptical indifference that render them far less susceptible than formerly to any appeal to their emotions. Hence, it is said, such oratory as survives is in reality little more than business talk, mere logical exposition in which there is no place for the passion and the fire that flamed in the words of a Patrick Henry or a Webster; so that, in our great national forum, Senators and Representatives

alike stand up and read their speeches, or are contented even with the customary "leave to print."

One cannot but think that both these explanations are altogether wrong. They utterly ignore the simpler and more natural solution to be found in the remarkable change that has taken place in the nature of the questions that have now for the past two decades been most prominent in the sphere of American politics. For the first time in our national history the popular thought is centred wholly upon issues that are absolutely economic and in no sense sentimental.

In the later colonial period, at which time the history of American oratory in reality begins, although the question that divided the colonies from the mother-country was ostensibly a question of taxation, the underlying principle was more profoundly fundamental and more vital than one of constitutional relations. The thirteen colonies were just beginning to thrill with the half-unconscious stirrings of national life. Men dimly saw within their grasp the symbols and the splendor of sovereignty; they felt the strong creative impulse that is always present in the heart of the Anglo-Saxon; they were rousing themselves

to a recognition of the magnificence of their future, to the fact that they were no longer mere colonials, provincials, subjects of a foreign king, but free men in a free State, with a heritage of unlimited promise and with the power to claim it and defend it, if necessary, by force of arms. Therefore, when Patrick Henry and when Samuel Adams spoke, their words appealed to no sordid sentiment in those who heard them; but they voiced the aspirations of an entire people moved to its very heart by a prophetic consciousness of its own high destiny.

Again, after independence had been achieved and had finally ceased to be a theme for anything more than occasional oratory, there arose another issue that involved the strongest possible appeal to sentiment. The question of slavery in some of its innumerable phases often appeared to be nothing but a problem of political economy or of constitutional interpretation. For years the leading statesmen of both parties strove to make it such, to throw it into the background by compromise and concession, and to lock the door upon the national skeleton. But because it was at base a question of sentiment, appealing to men's sense of justice and mercy and righteousness, it would not

down; and when it had at last become indissolubly linked with still another and even greater cause—the maintenance of our national unity and the very life of the Republic—it stirred the profoundest depths of the nation's heart. No more momentous issue was ever yet evoked in the history of man, for it involved far more than the existence of a single nation; it concerned the success or failure of republican government and the fate of free institutions. No wonder, then, that it inspired oratory to which the annals of recorded eloquence can find no parallel. The day when Webster rose in the Senate of the United States to deliver, amid a silence like that of death, his marvellous reply to Hayne, may well be thought the most memorable and momentous in the whole history of the American Republic. And the speech of Webster was in every word and every line fully up to the sublime level of the issues it discussed. It is no exaggeration to say that it overtops any other effort of human eloquence that the world has known.\* Its only rival is the oration of Demosthenes on the Crown; and this, I think,

\* Lest this be thought extravagant, it may be interesting to note that the Lord Chief Justice of England, Baron Russell of Killowen, himself a finished orator, declared to an Ameri-

holding strictly to the attitude of dispassionate criticism, must take the second place. In patriotic fervor, in sincerity, in absolute mastery of the resources of rhetoric, and in intellectual power, the two great orators were equal; but from the stand-point of historical importance, and, above all, in the vastness of the ultimate consequences, the Greek must yield to the American. For in the case of Demosthenes the issue was immediately personal; in the case of Webster the issue was distinctly national. Demosthenes was defending and extenuating a political failure; Webster was pointing the way to a national triumph. The greatness upon which Demosthenes so fondly dwelt was retrospective; the greatness that Webster limned before his breathless hearers lay in the living present and the future. One statesman appealed to a proud and melancholy memory; the other to a splendid aspiration. One was pronouncing a stately funeral oration; the other was sounding a great trumpet-call to victory. And in the actual results achieved there can be no comparison. Athenian liberty was already dead, and no words, however elo-

can friend some little time ago that in his opinion Webster was, on the whole, the greatest master of eloquence of whom the world has any record.



quent, could bring it back to life. But American nationality was just feeling its first vigorous, vital impulse. The words of Demosthenes could, at the best, awaken in the mind of an Athenian nothing more than a sombre stirring of humiliation and regret for a past forever gone; the words of Webster, committed to memory and declaimed by generations of American children, sank down into the hearts of his countrymen until his closing sentence became the very watchword of the Republic, and until the great principle for which he spoke had been learned so thoroughly that when the years of storm and stress arrived a million men stood ready to pour out their blood like water, and a million mothers sent forth their sons with gladness to die in its defence. And the oration itself—what a wonderful thing it is! Its dignified and graceful exordium, its stately sentences moving on with an ever-growing impetus and throbbing with a joyous consciousness of irresistible power, its passion and pathos, its majestic rhythm and cadenced harmonies rising and sinking like a grand organ-roll or the thunder of the sea, and finally the magnificent sunburst of gorgeous imagery with which it ends! Even now, after more than sixty years have passed, and after the issues that inspired

it have been laid at rest forever, no American who deserves the name can read over those tremendous sentences without feeling his pulses quicken and his heart thrill with an exultant emotion so keen as to be almost pain.

As for Cicero, it would be absurd to compare him as an orator with either of the others. The fatal insincerity of character that taints his utterances makes some of his most elaborate orations, in spite of their rhetorical perfection, seem cheap and thin when set beside the massive eloquence of Demosthenes and Webster; his impassioned declamation too often suggests the actor's rant; his invective and his pathos at times come perilously near to the neurotic caterwauling of an hysterical woman.

Oratory naturally found a powerful stimulus in the Civil War and in the questions immediately arising from it; and for many years thereafter it was always possible for the political speaker to stir his hearers by calling up once more the memories and the passions of that gigantic conflict. But as a new generation came upon the scene and as other issues gradually forced their way to the front, eloquence was tamed. When the phrase, "waving the bloody shirt," was once coined, it marked

the end of the oratory that fed upon martial themes. Since 1880 the minds of the people have been fixed with more and more persistence upon the economic and financial policy of the country; and in this sphere there is little food for forensic eloquence. The schedules of a tariff are not inspiring to a popular orator; barbed wire and jute and cotton ties, and the relative merits of *ad valorem* and specific duties, cannot possibly be worked up into rhetorical material even by the most ingenious pleader. Nor is the financial question much more promising. There are persons, indeed, who have dwelt with harrowing detail upon the wrongs and sufferings of silver, and who have depicted in tones of horror the cowardice and the malevolence of gold; but the oratorical effect has not been striking. It is very difficult to draw tears from a hard-headed American crowd over the injuries and sorrows of a metal; nor will many persons rage together because of the depravity of something that can be represented by a chemical symbol. It is only when a more direct and personal turn can be given to the theme that an orator has any chance of real success. This is pretty well illustrated in Mr. Bryan's now memorable speech at Chicago in July, 1896. Had he

dwelt, as did the opposing speakers, upon the purely economic side of the question, he would have left the convention as cold as they did. He therefore deliberately chose to make the issue a sectional one: to pit the West against the East; to describe in impassioned language the honest farmer in his peaceful home ground down by malevolent oppressors, at whom the orator flung a fierce defiance. In other words, he turned a question of finance into a question of pure sentiment. As to the justice or the wisdom or the patriotism of this device, we are not here concerned; but from the oratorical point of view it was very shrewd, and it showed that Mr. Bryan possessed the oratorical instinct in a very high degree. Its success was, indeed, its justification; for as the sole aim of the orator is to master his audience and play upon their feelings until he can bend them to his will, oratory is the one thing of which the only criterion is success. The same remark applies to the substance of this speech, which has been criticised as tawdry, stilted, and even blasphemous; but which (ethical considerations apart) was, in fact, rhetorically perfect as being exactly suited to the state of mind of those who heard it and were mastered by it.

It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the present lack of oratory of a startling and dramatic kind is due neither to any decline in oratorical ability on the part of our public speakers, nor to any loss of impressibility on the part of the American people — certainly not to the latter, for there is ample evidence that as a nation we are becoming more rather than less emotional, more nervous, more excitable. But when the themes of oratory are not those that feed popular passion, the born orator pitches his utterances in a low key and subdues his whole discourse to the natural level of his subject. In fact, it is in this very thing that his real genius is best seen; for precisely in proportion to his greatness will an unerring instinct teach him to shun any attempt to elevate by purely rhetorical devices a theme that is in itself essentially commonplace. Hence it is that the ablest of our speakers to-day are just the ones who never force the note, but wisely prefer to leave upon their hearers the impression embodied in the fine Horatian description

urbani parentis viribus atque  
Extenuantis eas consulto;

and those who neglect this precept often come

perilously near the line where declamation passes into rant.

It is in this respect that the public speakers of the South are so curiously defective. As a class, they seem to think that any subject whatsoever can be made impressive provided it be plastered thick with a multiplicity of gaudy adjectives, bedizened with innumerable metaphors, and daubed all over with the rattle of rhetorical rouge. These men sow with the sack and not with the hand, and believe that they have hit upon an infallible formula for producing "eloquence" to order. I have in mind the Chief Executive of one of the oldest and stateliest of the Southern States, whose speeches are the *reductio ad absurdum* of this barbaric style. Whether he is delivering an inaugural address, or whether he is speaking over the pumpkins at a county fair, his verbal pyrotechnics are such that if I were to set down one of his passages in cold type most readers would suspect that I had invented it in a spirit of the wildest and most farcical burlesque. I do not know just how such oratory is generally regarded in the South. If it is taken seriously and viewed with admiration, the fact is a lamentable indication of the condition of public taste and of the

lack of any wide-spread æsthetic cultivation ; for were such a speaker to dress in a manner to harmonize with his oratorical style, he would appear before his audiences arrayed in a nose-ring and an inch of vermilion paint.

It must be confessed, however, that the South has no monopoly of this half-savage sort of pow-wow. All the national conventions held in 1896 provided choice specimens of it in nominating speeches that fairly knocked the bottom out of the vocabulary of eulogy, when some backwoods lawyer, unknown even to many of the delegates from his own State, would be described as " the peerless jurist, the profound scholar, the magnificent and electrifying orator, the world's greatest statesman and thinker !" At such utterances as these, pronounced before deliberative bodies that are supposed to shape the nation's policy and select its rulers, the self-respecting American can only blush for the credit of the Republic.

It is, indeed, in the subtle instinct that tells just how the discourse is to be attuned to the mood of the moment that the true orator is ultimately to be distinguished from the mere rhetorician. Nice judgment, perfect tact, and an innate sense of what is possible to be ac-

complished in a given situation have often done far more for a reputation than the actual arts of eloquence. A contemporaneous illustration may be found in Mr. Bryan's address at the Madison Square Garden, in this city, in reply to the Committee of Notification, which is an excellent case in point. His passionate harangue at Chicago and its remarkable effect on his immediate hearers had led every one to expect an equally fiery oration in New York; yet when he appeared before the great assembly that had gathered to receive him, he simply read a written essay with no attempt at eloquence whatever. His political opponents at once raised a howl of derision, and even many of his own supporters were for the moment much chagrined. Yet this was in reality one of the cleverest things that he had ever done; and the reason for this opinion is perfectly obvious. In the interval between his Chicago speech and the time set for his New York address, public expectation had been worked up to so extravagant a pitch that had he been Demosthenes and Cicero rolled into one he could not possibly have satisfied it. He therefore very wisely declined to attempt what, from the conditions, was foredoomed to failure—declined, in fact, to com-



pete against himself. To be sure, by reading an essay instead of delivering an oration, he disappointed his auditors, and he was gibed by the opposition press; but he did not forfeit his reputation as an orator, and this seeming fiasco made an admirable background for any brilliant and effective speeches that he might subsequently deliver.

Political orations in general may be classified under three heads. First come those great efforts that are overwhelming in their effect at the time of their delivery, and that stand the test of time so well as even now to be read with genuine pleasure and admiration. Next come the speeches that produce no great effect upon their immediate hearers, but that subsequently, by reason of their literary merit, take high rank among the classics of the language in which they are composed. Finally, there are the orations that serve their purpose at the time, or that win a temporary renown by reason of the occasion on which they were delivered, or because of the personal charm and impressiveness of the orator, but which are afterwards of little interest except as affording material for the historian. To the first class belong the greatest speeches of Demosthenes, of Webster, of Cicero, and perhaps of Lincoln.

Of the second class a type may be found in the parliamentary orations of Burke, who always emptied the House of Commons when he spoke, but whose loftiness of thought and splendor of diction have won for him a lasting place in the annals of political eloquence. To the third class belong the great mass of political orations in all ages and all countries. Such are the speeches of Henry Clay, in reading which one marvels at the effect which we know to have been produced by them, of Hayne and Benton and Everett and Legaré, of J. P. Hale and Sumner and Stevens, and, in fact, of pretty nearly all the American orators of the past fifty years.

In this country the public estimate of living orators is seldom accurate, because it is so warped and biassed by partisan prejudice. It is, moreover, largely influenced by the newspapers, which usually carry their criticism of the substance into condemnation of the form. Seldom, indeed, does a Democratic journal see anything to admire in the oratory of a Republican statesman; and in estimating the merit of a Democratic speaker, the Republican critics almost invariably (to use the time-honored expression) "dismiss it with a smile." Consequently, it is not until death has blunted the

sharpness of political acrimony that anything like a truthful estimate is ever formed, and even then it may be many years before the exaggerations of both partisan panegyric and partisan depreciation have fully passed away.

It is probable, for instance, that among all the orators of the past two decades public opinion at the present time would ascribe a marked supremacy to Mr. Blaine. Yet it is certain that it was not primarily as an orator that Mr. Blaine secured and kept his remarkable influence over the host of those who followed so loyally his personal and political fortunes. Mr. Blaine had, to be sure, the orator's temperament. He was mentally alert, quick to seize upon an effective point, impetuous, and in his early career full of fire. He had an unusual command of the resources of language, and unfailing tact and taste. Yet the fact remains that it was not through oratory that he won the commanding position which he held in his party's counsels, nor did he rely upon it to any great extent in carrying out his political ambitions. The reason is not far to seek. It is found in the fact that very early in his career he set before himself the presidency as the goal of his ambition, and with this always in mind he purposely

modified and restrained his natural bent in many ways. Now Mr. Blaine was by nature an exceedingly impulsive man, one whose temperament led him to form decisions with lightninglike rapidity, and to act upon them with unchecked and unreflecting impetuosity. In this quality of mind lay at once his strength and his weakness, and to it his greatest successes and his greatest mistakes are alike directly traceable. Had he been content to limit his ambition to anything short of the highest office in the nation's gift, he would undoubtedly have let his oratorical talent have full play, and would have deserved the reputation for eloquence that is now, I think, unreasonably given him. It was, to be sure, by a spirited and brilliant speech that he won his first great national distinction, while still a member of the House of Representatives. The occasion was a debate upon the question of granting a complete political amnesty to Jefferson Davis, in spite of the fact that Mr. Davis himself had never asked for it. Mr. Blaine opposed the measure, and Mr. Hill, of Georgia, one of the very ablest of the Southern leaders, stood forth as its champion and defender. In the spirited debate that followed, Mr. Blaine gave full play to his impetuosity.

With no preparation and no premeditation, he flung himself into the forensic combat, and in a burst of vivid oratory fanned again the fires of sectional feeling which had begun to smoulder, but which at his words once more flamed up as fiercely as in the days of the Civil War. The whole North thrilled at his passionate appeal, and in an hour his name was in all men's mouths. It was the victory of a partisan, but it was magnificent nevertheless; and the memory of it led Colonel Ingersoll a few years later, in an almost equally celebrated speech, to style him "the Plumed Knight," a title that presently became hackneyed in the vocabulary of the stump. Yet never again did Mr. Blaine fully give way to an oratorical impulse such as this. Experience and keen self-analysis taught him the danger that lay in his own impetuosity, and from the moment when he first formed a definite ambition to be President he set a bridle on his tongue. His speeches thereafter were able, ingenious, and adequate, but, to the present writer at least, there seemed always to run through them a certain tone of calculation, of conscious design half verging upon craft, that robbed them of their spontaneity and greatly marred their psychological effect. The speaker seemed always to be keep-

ing something back, to withhold a part of his confidence, to be playing with his audience as a cat plays with a mouse, and to be very far indeed from the perfect self-abandonment that marks the inspired orator.

Mr. Blaine's great influence as a party leader sprang, in fact, from a deeper source than verbal eloquence. Men early began to speak of his "magnetism," and the word speedily entered into the slang of our politics. It was, in consequence, so harped upon and burlesqued as to become a mere vulgarism of party speech; yet, for want of a better word, it must still be used to express the secret of his power. Its real meaning, however, is not so often understood. The popular conception of a "magnetic" leader is of one who wins adherents by a jovial bearing, by a sort of hail-fellow-well-met jollity, of which few statesmen were ever more guiltless than Mr. Blaine—a model of personal dignity in all his relations with his friends and followers. By his "magnetism" we should rather understand a certain power that he exercised, through those immediately in contact with him, upon great masses of men who had never seen him, so that they, too, became irresistibly convinced of his incomparable fitness for command. The manifestation

of this power is a curious psychological study, and may be illustrated in a statement made to the present writer by an official of the State Department at the time when Mr. Blaine was Secretary. This gentleman, who was, by the way, politically opposed to Mr. Blaine, said that every morning the various officials of the department would be at work upon their usual tasks, going through them in the leisurely way that is traditional in this particular division of the public service, chatting amicably together, yawning, pausing to scan the morning paper, and in general accomplishing a minimum of work in a maximum of time. Suddenly, for no reason that any one could explain, a sort of impulse comparable to an electric shock would run through the assemblage. Conversation would cease, newspapers would be laid aside, pens would fly over the paper, the whole work of the department would all at once proceed with intense celerity. No one had been heard to enter the next room, not a word of warning had been spoken, yet every one in the place knew by an inexplicable instinct that Mr. Blaine was in his office.

This strange power is probably a natural attribute of the born leader of men. It was possessed in a large degree by General Grant, a

man who, in temperament, training, and mental processes, was the very antithesis of Mr. Blaine. Old army officers often tell of their experiences in 1863, when the newly promoted soldier was put in command of the troops who were ultimately to operate against Vicksburg. Previous attempts against the Confederate stronghold had failed disastrously, and soldiers and officers alike were thoroughly disheartened. There was a general inefficiency in the staff, and a general lack of system, order, and discipline throughout the army. Plans were made and unmade; regiments were marched aimlessly backwards and forwards; supplies went to the wrong place; everything, in fact, was at sixes and sevens. This was the state of things when it was announced that General Grant had been put in command. Old officers shrugged their shoulders. Here was more experimenting. A new general meant to them only a new element of confusion. On a certain day Grant assumed command, but not immediately at general headquarters. No one had yet seen him when, before forty-eight hours had elapsed, in some indefinable way a curious change came over the whole army. An invisible power made itself felt in every department. Definite purpose began to appear in every



move. Supplies appeared when they were wanted. The troops were swung into intelligible combinations. Everywhere precision, order, discipline reigned where before there had been only confusion, chaos, insubordination. And when things were seen to be actually *done*, the most inveterate grumbler on the staff stood up in the midst of his fellow-officers and, slapping his leg, roared out with a sort of Homeric joy, "At last! at last! By heavens, at last they have given us a MAN!"

Therefore, it is by no means correct to lay too much stress on Mr. Blaine's oratory as the chief factor in his political supremacy. It was rather his resourcefulness, his tact, his constructive power, his "magnetism," that secured to him his unquestioned leadership. Not but what his speeches were admirable efforts, from the purely political addresses that he made in the campaign of 1876 and 1880 to the elaborate and dignified oration pronounced by him before the President, the Houses of Congress, and the Diplomatic Corps on the death of President Garfield. The brief addresses, too, that he made in his own canvass for the Presidency in 1884 were admirable in their point and tact and persuasiveness; though it was this campaign that extinguish-

ed his oratory altogether. The extraordinary labor that he took upon himself, the excitement and fatigue, and more than all else perhaps, his exasperating defeat by a few hundred votes in a single State, quenched the fire of his ambition, and left him a disappointed and almost broken man. He spoke again in the campaign of 1888, but while his intellect was as active as before, his physical strength had been sapped, so that his every sentence seemed to involve an obvious and painful effort. The orator, like the actor, needs, above all else, to overflow with an abundant and vigorous vitality, because, like the actor, the impression that he makes is in no small degree a physical impression. Yet it was not merely in bodily force that Mr. Blaine's great defeat impaired his power. There was a marked deterioration in manner and in temper perceptible during his last few years that can, perhaps, be most clearly seen in some of his state papers, and notably in his diplomatic controversy with Lord Salisbury concerning the American claim to jurisdiction in Behring Sea. The traditions of diplomacy require the tone of all formal communications to be ceremonious and courtly to the last degree. The question at issue may be of the most burning kind, the contro-

versy may be even of the sort that inevitably ends in war, yet nevertheless the diplomatic duellists must everywhere observe the most punctilious etiquette, and never in word or phrase overstep the limits of a stately self-restraint. These traditions Lord Salisbury, on his side, observed to the full. His immensely able argument was couched throughout in terms of the finest courtesy, suggesting in every line the urbanity and the graceful deference that mark the intercourse of high-bred gentlemen. But Mr. Blaine's despatches, whatever be their plausibility and force, are very painful reading. There is observable in them here and there a certain swagger, a half-rowdy tone of lurking insolence, an offensive assumption that his opponent's argument is one of conscious duplicity and falsehood. It is not likely that our diplomatic records contain another correspondence such as this. Some may advance against this view and in defence of Mr. Blaine the once famous Hülse-mann Letter, written to the Austrian Minister by Daniel Webster when Secretary of State, and resenting the attempted protest of Austria against our Government's very obvious sympathies with the Hungarian insurgents. But this letter, in which many persons, in total dis-

regard of chronology, have seen the original suggestion of the "Pogram Defiance" in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, while it was, to be sure, rather startlingly unconventional, and, on the whole, rather bumptious in its manner, contained not a word that could give the slightest personal offence to its recipient.

There is something of the irony of fate in the circumstance that, after years of studied discretion in word and act, the careless speech of a stranger should have been so largely instrumental in marring the one great ambition of Mr. Blaine's career. There is something almost tragic, too, in the thought of all that long-continued effort, all that eager hope, all that fertility of resource, and all those brilliant gifts just failing of supreme success. The present writer saw Mr. Blaine four days before the election that was to set the seal of failure on his remarkable career. It was at the very end of the campaign, and he was on his way to some small city in Connecticut to make one last address. He sat by the open window of the railway-carriage waiting for the train to start. His head was bent forward, and the sunken eyes, the face blanched to an ashen pallor, and the pinched and jaded features all told the tale of mental weariness and physical

exhaustion. A knot of a dozen or twenty men, who had gathered on the platform, stared curiously at him ; and now and then, as one or another of them approached and offered to shake hands, Mr. Blaine would thrust three fingers through the window and force a wan, mechanical smile. It reminded one of nothing half so much as of some hunted animal driven to its hole and turning feebly to eye its unfeeling persecutors. Could the very bitterest of his enemies have beheld him then, and could they have foreseen the impending wreck of his life's one great ambition, they must have felt some stirrings of pity, and, it may be, even of remorse ; for the sight was infinitely pathetic, and one to haunt the memory for many days.

The extent to which false estimates of living orators gain popular acceptance through newspaper influence can be very well illustrated in the case of Mr. Roscoe Conkling. Mr. Conkling was a fair speaker, no better and no worse than scores of others who in his day and generation were heard upon the floor of Congress. His best efforts were those of the earlier part of his senatorial career, during the Reconstruction Period ; but if any one will take the trouble to consult the files of the *Congressional Record*, he will find that, while Mr. Conk-

ling often spoke with a good deal of ability, and sometimes with considerable force and point, there is nothing in his speeches to mark him out as oratorically pre-eminent among the other political leaders of that day, and that not a few of his contemporaries easily surpassed him. He was, for instance, markedly inferior to the late Matthew H. Carpenter, of Wisconsin, a very brilliant and effective debater, though by the present generation wellnigh forgotten. Nevertheless, from the beginning of President Grant's first administration, in 1869, down to the time of his own death, in 1888, Mr. Conkling was singled out by the newspaper press for the most extravagant laudation as being one of the most impressive, stirring, and convincing orators of the day. Even now it is a sort of tradition in newspaper offices, and therefore in the minds of a large number of intelligent Americans, that Mr. Conkling's name is always to be mentioned in enumerating our great masters of political eloquence. Mr. Conkling's oratorical reputation, in fact, is mainly the artificial creation of a prolonged and elaborate newspaper "boom."

Now, the original inventors of this myth were undoubtedly sincere believers in it; and those who afterwards accepted it did so large-

ly as a matter of faith in an established tradition. The explanation of the thing is a two-fold explanation. The first reason is found in Mr. Conkling's personality; the second in the influence that he was able to exert through certain fortunate political connections. Mr. Conkling, as every one knows, was a man of rather striking presence, powerful in build, and one who always sought to make the most of his own physical advantages. He was, indeed, excessively vain, dressing in a way to attract attention, continually posing for the admiration of the galleries, and doing everything with an air that was meant to be impressive and that did impress a good many inexperienced persons who were unable accurately to distinguish between swaggering arrogance and the dignity that is the accompaniment of real power. Whenever he made a formal speech, the way for it was prepared as carefully as when a dramatist works up a situation to afford an effective entrance for the leading actor. Mr. Conkling's strut, his portentous frown, his dramatic gestures, and even the arrangement of his famous curl were all studied out by him as minutely as his Roman prototype, Hortensius, is said to have studied out the arrangement of the folds in his forensic

toga. Mr. Blaine, in fact, in the very celebrated speech that made Conkling his implacable enemy for life, found in this display of personal vanity the feather that winged his sharpest shaft. This speech, whose studied antitheses prove it to have been no impromptu sally, but a carefully prepared attack, must be regarded as wholly unparliamentary, and, in view of the place in which it was delivered, as lacking in the very first elements of good taste; while throughout its whole comparison of Mr. Conkling with Henry Winter Davis it extravagantly overrated Davis and was in reality too severe upon Conkling, yet there was so large an element of truth in its characterization as to make it rankle in the latter's memory down to the very day of his death. The comparison of Mr. Conkling to a turkey-cock was at once caught up by all the political cartoonists, and thereafter the strut and the pompous pose appeared and reappeared in a pictorial form as ludicrous as it was felicitous. Mr. Conkling's theatric self-assertion, however, though repellent to most persons of refined taste, did nevertheless impose upon a great many people, inasmuch as the world at large generally takes a man at his own valuation; and the newspaper correspondents in particular were deeply im-



pressed by his airs and graces. They spoke and wrote of him habitually as "Lord Roscoe," and regarded his swagger as superb. The power, too, which at this time he undoubtedly wielded may be taken as affording some excuse for their delusion. President Grant, who was rather famous for his misjudgment of men in civil life, gave his personal and political friendship to Mr. Conkling, and by allowing him to dictate the federal appointments in the State of New York, enabled him to play for several years the congenial *rôle* of political dictator. Thus with those who saw his "Olympian" bearing apparently quite justified by his possession of acquired power, there grew up an unquestioning belief in his greatness, and the tradition survived the wreck of his political fortunes.

It was said of Mr. Conkling that while in Washington he had made himself proficient in boxing, and that he took the greatest delight in getting some inexperienced friend, who had not heard of his accomplishment, to put on the gloves for an amicable bout with him. Then would he buffet the unfortunate man most unmercifully, and feel an exquisite joy in his own vast superiority as he knocked his victim about the room. This was a very characteristic trait,

because it was so typical of a bully's nature. That he was, in fact, a bully was made perfectly clear in many of the most important crises of his public life—a bully in his attempts to browbeat his way to the attainment of his ends, and a bully in his conduct when he encountered a firm and manly opposition.

The way in which he took Mr. Blaine's oratorical attack upon him is an excellent illustration, for it is the very first virtue of a politician to accept with good-nature the punishment that he may receive in the course of his public career, and not to bear malice for any length of time; whereas Mr. Conkling never forgave this verbal chastisement which he had neither the courage nor the ability to answer at the time, but which he stored up vindictively in his memory to make of it an excuse for many exhibitions of petty spite throughout the rest of his career.

Another lamentable revelation of his real nature was that which he made before the Rochester Convention in 1877, when, on certain questions of party policy, he came into conflict with Mr. George William Curtis, the gentlest, most dignified, and most courteous of men, and made a personal attack upon him which went completely over the line that sepa-

rates oratorical invective from ordinary black-guardism. Mr. Conkling's biographer, in chronicling this unpleasant incident, quotes a eulogy upon the speech from the columns of a newspaper which regards it as one of the greatest in the whole annals of oratory, and compares Mr. Conkling with Pitt, Burke, and Sheridan ; but the biographer himself, while professing to reproduce the speech in full, expunges, out of shame, some of its phrases, and supplies their place with asterisks.

Again, every one remembers his arrogant attempt, in the early days of the Garfield administration, to impose his will upon the President and to stretch the senatorial prerogative until it should overshadow and in part destroy the independence of the Executive. Had it been only the amiable Garfield who confronted him in this attempt, he might have succeeded ; but here again, behind the President, stood his old antagonist, Mr. Blaine, then Secretary of State—cool, watchful, a master of fence, and wielding a weapon whose perfect temper made Conkling, with his clumsy bludgeon, appear the veriest tyro. Unable to carry his point, the Senator, like a sulky school-boy, resigned his seat, in the hope of a “vindication” at the hands of the New York Legislature, and there-

by played into the hands of his opponent, who skilfully blocked the "vindication," and in the end brought about Mr. Conkling's political downfall.

Yet, in spite of all these revelations of himself, the tradition of his greatness still survived, until the myth obtained a final lodgment in the imagination of his countrymen, and the tradition itself has now become a fixed belief in the minds of a great majority of the American people.

If Mr. Conkling affords a good instance of an orator whose reputation has been unduly exalted in the popular mind, Senator Hill, of New York, may be taken as one who, on the whole, has had scant justice done him. This, also, is quite easily accounted for. A good deal of prejudice has sprung up in estimating his ability as a public speaker, from the circumstance, now pretty generally admitted to be true, that he has at times delivered addresses that were not wholly original with himself—to put it plainly, that he has sometimes had his speeches written for him. Accepting this assertion as a fact, some explanation is necessary to show that in reality it should not seriously affect one's judgment of such speeches as are beyond any question all his own.

In the first place, if the truth were known, it would probably be found that Mr. Hill is by no means singular in availing himself of another's aid in getting up some of his formal speeches. And though in our own country such a thing is generally held to be rather discreditable to an orator, in other countries it is accepted as a very ordinary incident. Few European monarchs, for example, ever make a speech of their own composition, but impressively pronounce the words that are carefully prepared for them by their Ministers of State; nor is this necessarily due to any inability on their part to give a fit expression to their own ideas, but because, having often to speak in places and on subjects of which they have themselves no minutely accurate knowledge, they make use of the special experience of other men, lest by some careless phrase or indiscreet allusion they should give unintentional offence. The only exception that one easily recalls is the German Kaiser, whose utterances are absolutely his own, and are, from an oratorical point of view, often extremely picturesque and stirring. Yet this very exception affords a strong justification of the rule adopted by his brother sovereigns; for all Europe is uneasy whenever it is known that he is

expected to make a speech, and every one can recall a dozen instances when the over-frank expressions of the hare-brained War Lord have not only given grievous offence to other governments, but have excited the bitterest resentment among large sections of his own subjects.

The rule holds good, also, of many personages whose position is less political than ornamental. The Prince of Wales, for instance, a hundred times a year is expected to preside at functions where a speech from him is necessary—now at the meeting of a charitable society, now at the opening of a hospital, now at a dinner of artists or literary men or scientists, and now at some ceremonial more closely connected with the immediate interests of the State. It would be impossible for him to speak with pertinence and accuracy upon so many subjects requiring special knowledge and often special tact; and, as a matter of fact, upon every one of these occasions his innocuous little speech is carefully prepared for him beforehand by some discreet person who understands the situation and is able to infuse into the address the necessary amount of technical allusion and local appropriateness. Every one in England fully understands this, though the

newspapers cherish a decorous fiction by occasional bursts of perfunctory enthusiasm over the Prince's gifts as a versatile and tactful speaker. In private, however, no one thinks it worth while to adopt this superstition, and the present writer knows of one individual who was once invited to prepare an address for the Prince to deliver before a gathering of archæologists, and who, since then, pretty nearly always manages to bring a conversation around to the point where he can inform the company of the vast honor that was done him in asking him to play the part of oratorical jackal to his Royal Highness. Nor is this vicarious eloquence despised by foreign statesmen generally. When the subject on which they have to speak is one in which they are personally interested or with which they are already especially familiar, they trust to their own resources and their own inspiration ; but in other cases the departmental clerk or the convenient, and often very able, private secretary gets up the facts and provides the backbone of the speech, and frequently also much of its actual flesh and blood, in the way of argument and phrase and rhetorical embellishment. It is likely, too, that, as said above, our own statesmen are not in reality so very

different from their foreign brethren. One of the oldest and most respected members of Congress once showed me the manuscript of an address that he was going to deliver on the subject of the tariff, and casually remarked :

“ My son-in-law did that, and a very good speech it is, too.”

The writer ventured to ask, knowing him very well, whether all his political speeches were from the same source.

“ Oh no,” he answered. “ Only, you see, I don’t care a straw myself about the tariff question, and he is full of it ; so I just asked him to get up the speech.”

Consequently, it must not be viewed as a serious charge against Mr. Hill if he has followed the many distinguished precedents that are at hand. There is in his case a broad distinction to be drawn between the various orations that he has from time to time delivered ; and this line of demarcation is to be fixed by remembering a perfectly obvious truth in connection with his political career. Mr. Hill’s early training and his long possession of party leadership in the State of New York produced a very natural effect in making the politics of that State more personally interesting to him



than those which are connected with national affairs. He is in this respect the natural successor of Mr. Tilden, knowing thoroughly every district of the State, every local politician of importance, the history of every issue and of every movement for a quarter of a century; and he can gauge to a dot the motives and the measures of enemy and friend alike. This sort of thing has by many been described in a contemptuous but rather telling phrase as "peanut politics"; yet those who use the term forget that New York State, with its fifty thousand square miles of area, its six millions of inhabitants, its enormous wealth, and its vast commercial interests, is a political entity of far greater importance than many of the minor European kingdoms; and that what they sneer at in Mr. Hill they would commend as statesmanship in a Dutch or Danish or Norwegian politician. It is, in fact, only by comparison with the immensity of our whole great national domain that the local interests of New York seem relatively unimportant.

However this may be, it is certain that Mr. Hill, when first elected to the Senate, went very reluctantly to Washington, and only as a *pis aller*; that for a long time he felt politically homesick in his new and untried sur-

roundings; and that, as was entirely natural, he could not all at once get fully into touch with the men and the measures that he had hitherto, like the rest of us, looked at only from a distance. Consequently, when it became necessary for Senator Hill to speak upon questions that were still to him comparatively unfamiliar, he felt a very natural mistrust of his own ability to avoid the pitfalls that were certain to be dug for him; and if he then availed himself of another's aid we need not blame him overmuch. That which does, however, call for censure is the wretched choice he must have made of a collaborator, for the first set speech pronounced by him before the Senate is one of the most ghastly things that the records of Congressional oratory can show. In it Mr. Hill was so ill-advised as to attempt a humorous *rôle*, and to string together a lot of wretched puns upon the names of the leading New York newspapers—the *Sun*, the *World*, the *Times*, the *Tribune*, and so forth—the effect of which was painful and pathetic to a degree. Even the opposition journals passed it over lightly, so melancholy was the spectacle that the Senator afforded; and they gave him the benefit of the charity which men accord to those who have lately died.

Mr. Hill never again made himself responsible for anything so unfortunate as this; yet one may, in general, set aside, when considering his oratorical ability, those speeches that belong to the period of his first entrance upon the field of national politics. In them he had to do with themes that had not yet begun to interest him, and in discussing them he showed the intellectual *gaucherie* of one who is ill at ease amid unusual surroundings.

It is not likely that there are many who really lay much stress upon Mr. Hill's ability as an orator, no matter what his subject; and if oratory be so defined as to include only the impassioned and emotional forms of public speaking, then there is little or nothing to be said in his behalf. But no such restricted definition is reasonable; and with a broader standard of judgment it is likely that Mr. Hill deserves some serious consideration as an orator. Whenever he has had to advocate a policy which concerned the things that were nearest to his own heart, or to defend a course of action taken by him in relation to the affairs of his own State, he has shown no small power of exposition and argument and persuasion. When, as Governor, he from time to time addressed great audiences on State affairs, he often rose

to a high level. The theme was a congenial one; he knew it thoroughly; and his audiences were gathered, not to be amazed or thrilled or startled, but to be convinced. Under such conditions Mr. Hill's efforts were models of earnest, lucid, and straightforward speech, and their effect in gaining him a popular support was undeniable. A life-long Republican, who is also a gentleman of great cultivation and critical ability, once met the present writer soon after attending a meeting at which Governor Hill had spoken, and, in answer to a question, said :

“He seems to me to speak with very great ability and force, and after hearing him I am convinced that he is thoroughly sincere.”

Now, as political sincerity is the very last virtue with which Mr. Hill's enemies would be willing to credit him, it must be admitted that to produce an impression such as this upon a prejudiced opponent is evidence of genuine oratorical power. It was, however, a great tactical mistake when, at the Chicago Convention of 1896, Mr. Hill was put forward by the gold men as their chief orator. Wholly unimpassioned at all times, excitement on the part of those about him seems always to make him colder and more unbend-

ing still, and on this occasion his manner was one of absolute frigidity. The address he made was wholly argumentative, a pure appeal to reason, and one which, if pronounced before a deliberative body, would have had considerable weight. But in these days a national convention is no longer a deliberative body. With the galleries packed by a yelling mob, and the floor filled by a surging mass of delegates frantic with excitement, mere argument and reason make no impression; and only the orator who can appeal to sentiment and passion can obtain the mastery, and rule by the power of words that burn and blaze their way to the mind through the path of the emotions.

It is doubtful whether even the warmest friends of ex-President Cleveland regard him as an orator; and it may therefore seem a waste of time to speak of him in dealing with a subject such as this. Nothing, indeed, could be more remote from eloquence than his infrequent political addresses. Couched in polysyllabic words that clumsily clog themselves into sentences of more than Johnsonian ponderosity, Mr. Cleveland's ideas when given in a public speech are nearly always found to be distinctly platitudinous. That the citizen should always cherish virtue, that unbridled

selfishness and greed are serious dangers to the body politic, that intelligence and public spirit are especially desirous in a Republic—such are the by no means startling and original thoughts that appear and reappear in Mr. Cleveland's deliverances. The only question that arises in one's mind is whether this enumeration of the baldest truisms must be accepted as the best thing that the ex-President can do in the way of oratory, or whether this style has been deliberately selected by him as being ultimately the wisest means of accomplishing a distinct and definite object. It has been very shrewdly pointed out (I think by Mr. E. L. Godkin) that for a statesman who is seeking public confidence rather than popular admiration, this rather tame and unoriginal vein is exceedingly judicious; and I am inclined to believe that there is much to be said in favor of such an hypothesis. There is nothing, in fact, that the average citizen so much distrusts as mere brilliancy in a public man. He is not brilliant himself, and he has a vague suspicion that one who is so extremely clever may be altogether too clever to be trusted. He will admire him immensely, but he will be always just the least bit afraid of him. On the other hand, a statesman who is prosaic, and

apparently even a little dull, and who will roll out plenty of good sound morality in a comfortable jog-trot way, with nothing to startle or to excite, appeals very strongly to the representative citizen. It reminds him of his minister (good man!) who, to be sure, puts him regularly to sleep, but under whose ministrations he feels that he can sleep with perfect safety, knowing that no theological fences will be broken down and no fine old dogmas shattered. This is precisely the reason why our Presidents have nearly always been selected because they were "safe" men rather than political geniuses; and it may be that Mr. Cleveland, who is by no means lacking in shrewdness, has framed his oratorical style with this very thought in mind.

There are, indeed, some indications that did he but choose he might give utterance to speeches in quite a different style. Not many of our Presidents have been known as makers of epigrams or as fashioners of phrases; yet of these few Mr. Cleveland ranks next to President Lincoln and President Grant. Some of the sentences and verbal combinations contained in his letters and messages are exceedingly crisp and pointed, and, in fact, they long ago obtained a wide popular currency. Such

is his famous maxim, "Public office is a public trust," which Mr. Dana, of the *Sun*, declares to be not original with Mr. Cleveland; but as nothing in this world is in reality original, this criticism need not be taken very seriously. Every one recalls the expressions "innocuous desuetude," "offensive partisanship," "pernicious activity," and "ghoulish glee." Perhaps we should also include "the communism of pelf," a phrase exploited in his message to Congress in 1888, though precisely what it really means must remain uncertain. In some of his State papers, also, while the form is still Johnsonian, there may be found a point and vivacity not visible in his formal speeches. Several of his pension vetoes, in which he exposed the absurdity of some malingering claimant's case, were very neatly put. His Venezuela message, too, was a bit of English of which any one might be proud; and one of the London journals, even while condemning the substance of it with great severity, felt bound to speak of its language as marked by "stateliness and force."

Finally, in several of his non-political speeches, when he perhaps felt less restraint in saying what he had to say, there are passages which abandon altogether the portentous and truistic



vein and exhibit quite unusual qualities. Such passages may be found in the speech that he made at the Harvard celebration in 1886. In the intensely academic atmosphere of that interesting occasion, surrounded as he was by scholars and men whose university associations united them in a bond of intellectual brotherhood, Mr. Cleveland spoke very simply and naturally of his own regret that the circumstances of his life had given him no Alma Mater; and in what he said there was a certain suggestion of wistfulness, conveyed with great dignity and good taste, that touched the hearts of all who heard him. On just one occasion Mr. Cleveland has shown that he possesses a fund of quaint humor and a gift for its expression. This was in 1891, at a local celebration near his former home on Cape Cod, when Mr. Cleveland put aside his sesquipedalian manner altogether and spoke just as a neighbor speaks to neighbors, with perfect naturalness and ease, and with many touches of quiet fun that one may look for in vain in his other public utterances. There was nothing the least forced about it all, and it revealed a genial side to his character that was very winning. Altogether, then, one may rightly hold that Mr. Godkin's hypothesis (if indeed the hypothesis be Mr. God-

kin's) is very plausible ; and that Mr. Cleveland may actually have adopted a labored and conventional style of oratory from a desire to win confidence rather than applause, and to avoid the snares that beset the possessor of a too conspicuous cleverness.

If this was really his serious intention, he was perhaps confirmed in it through the awful example afforded by Mr. Chauncey M. Depew. Mr. Depew, as every one knows, possesses a rare union of sound judgment, vivid imagination, and lively wit, and is an adept in the art of putting things to the multitude. In the early seventies it looked as though he intended to cultivate this gift in a serious way and to develop a style in which judgment and imagination should be the chief elements, with humor strictly subordinated to the other more solid qualities. Had he done so, there is no doubt that he would have exercised a very marked political influence. But either because his defeat in New York State in 1872 put him out of conceit with a purely political career, or because the temptation to say good things overpowered his discretion, he presently took up the line of after-dinner speaking, with which his name is now so generally associated. His after-dinner speeches are among the best of

their kind ; but to be known first of all as an after-dinner speaker is to abandon any claim upon serious consideration. Once in a while Mr. Depew will speak at length and with earnestness upon some weighty theme, and will speak most admirably, but his hearers hardly relish such an innovation, and persist in regarding him (we use the word in no offensive sense) as a sort of public jester. This means the negation of any real influence; for no oratory can seriously sway the mind when each person present, as he settles himself down comfortably in his chair at the entrance of the orator, displays upon his countenance the premonitory flicker of an expectant grin.

Perhaps the best contemporaneous example of self-restraint, and ease, and perfect taste in public oratory is to be found in some of the addresses of ex-President Harrison. As a speaker he is an instance of the curious development that seems to attend the occupancy of the presidential office. Before his election he had for many years been in public life and had spoken much ; yet no one ever regarded him as having any especial facility as an orator. In fact, while in the Senate he once made use of the expression, "I lift up a prayer"—a form of locution which suggests the stereotyped

vocabulary of the country prayer-meeting ; and the *Post* of this city caught it up and rang the changes on it until the only thing that a mention of Mr. Harrison suggested to many intelligent citizens was the act of "lifting up a prayer." Nevertheless, as President, he never made a flat or feeble speech ; but, on the contrary, surprised the whole country by the finish and ease of all his public utterances. Especially notable were the brief addresses that he made during his presidential progress across the continent, and above all to the audiences that met him in the Southern States. Here he was surrounded by those who were politically his opponents and against whom he, as a soldier, had fought in the days of the Civil War. It was no easy matter to speak a score of times under conditions such as these without saying anything to give offence, or else descending to the most *banal* conventionalities. Yet Mr. Harrison never once did either, but rose above all criticism in a series of little speeches that are perfect gems in their way—graceful, winning, suggestive, and tactful to a degree. In the longer addresses that he made during his tenure of the presidency, the same qualities are always present. One recalls especially his speech before the Peace Congress

at Washington, which was an oration marked by equal dignity and urbanity, expressing as it did a sympathetic approval of the aims of his auditors while holding fast, as became the guardian of the national honor, to the view that, under existing conditions, the sword is often the best auxiliary of the olive-branch.

Taking a retrospective glance at recent American history, it is probable that of all the speakers who have been heard in the national forum during the past quarter of a century, the most naturally gifted orator was General Garfield. He had, indeed, many advantages that other politicians have not often shared. In the first place, he was one who, as Presidents go, must be regarded as a man of unusual cultivation. This attribute need not, indeed, be pressed too hard nor made too much of, for it had its obvious limitations. He received, to be sure, while young, a college training; but it is not likely that anything more than a glimmering of real culture could have been imparted by Williams College as it was some forty years ago, in spite of Mr. Garfield's own much-quoted but rather absurd saying about Mark Hopkins and the pine table. That he subsequently exhibited attainments which are rare among politicians is quite true; yet

now and then the limitations already mentioned would still appear and bear evidence to the difficulty of escaping from early influences. Mr. Garfield had been at one time and for a number of years a teacher, and in private life something of the pedagogue kept always cropping up in his fondness for advising his friends as to what they ought to read, and in his readiness to correct small errors of pronunciation and of syntax.

This trait was curiously illustrated not long before his death in an occurrence that, when one considers the occasion, was almost grotesque. Soon after Guiteau had fired the shot that was to prove so fatal, and while General Garfield lay on his bed tormented with ceaseless pain, a friend who had been admitted to the room spoke a few words of comfort.

"Mr. President," he said, "this thing has blotted out all party feeling in the nation. Every American to-day feels the deepest sympathy for you."

The sufferer turned his face and spoke with difficulty in a low, gasping voice:

"Sympathy *with*," said he, "not sympathy *for*."

And later, when his death had been pro-

nounced inevitable, and some one asked him to write a line with his name, as a last gift, he traced these words:

*Strangulatus pro republica.*

Now, it was a little odd that at such a moment he should have chosen to express himself in Latin, and that, having chosen Latin, he should employ this particular verb *strangulare*, which, in the sense here given it, is perfectly classical and good, but somewhat rare. It showed, indeed, his learning, but it showed a certain pedantry as well.

Not always, however, did he have his erudition quite so well in hand. In the course of his speech at the National Convention of 1880, when he presented the name of Senator Sherman, he compared himself and his delegation to Leonidas and the devoted band at Thermopylæ, concluding with the words:

"And we shall stand firmly here, no matter how many *Greeks* you may bring against us."

Which makes it clear that, for the moment at least, his Greeks and his Persians were very badly mixed.

At times, also, some slight evidences of defective taste were to be noticed by the careful observer. We are inclined to describe as such

the scene when, after taking the inaugural oath upon the steps of the Capitol, he turned and kissed his mother, who was seated just behind him. Of course, from one point of view, this thing was mighty fine, and it threw the editors of Sunday-school papers, both here and in England, into a prolonged ecstasy: yet we rather doubt whether in reality it was quite so fine after all; for, apart from its being just the least bit too theatric, it most inappropriately injected the purely domestic relations of an individual into the midst of a supremely national ceremony, and one in which the stateliness and dignity of a great public function ought to have been the only thing before all minds.

However, with these few reservations, it may be unhesitatingly asserted that Mr. Garfield was, by nature and by training alike, a most impressive orator. Next to Jefferson, and perhaps John Quincy Adams, he was of all our Presidents the most highly trained; and next to Mr. Arthur, who succeeded him, he was the most of a man of the world. Wide reading, travel, and long intercourse with men of every type had given him a broad and comprehensive outlook; and unlike most of our public men, he had thought out for himself the



views, both economic and political, that he advocated; nor did he shuffle about in the currents of changing opinion, as do those politicians who have no convictions of their own, but wait subserviently upon the caprices of the mob. He led rather than followed; and this is why his speeches in Congress were not mere ephemeral splurges, but are to this day continually quoted for their apt and lucid statement of fundamental truths. Unlike other party leaders, also, there was nothing petty or personal in his treatment of political opponents. He struck hard blows, but they were fair, and left no bitterness behind. As a man, he made no enemies by his oratory; and he gave the impression of a spirit too broad and too nobly generous for petty altercations. Mr. Garfield was singularly fortunate also in his personal endowments. Gifted with a fine presence, a resonant and expressive voice, and an easy and singularly winning manner, he charmed his listeners from the very first sentences of an oration. He had, too, a certain sensuousness of temperament which with a different environment and early training might easily have developed into sensuality, but which, in fact, merely imparted a richness and warmth to his utterances, and indicated

only the virility which is absolutely essential to the successful orator, and which was so noticeable in Webster and in Clay. With all these qualities, then, both natural and acquired, Mr. Garfield stood forth, I think, as the very greatest of recent American orators ; and all his speeches, whether they be his carefully prepared deliverances in the halls of Congress or his spontaneous utterances upon the stump, are vivid, clean-cut, and forceful to a degree, marked everywhere by thought and imagination, with a certain large and luminous quality about them, and often rising into splendid and stirring eloquence.

Altogether, then, it is not easy to believe that the days of oratory have departed forever, that orators are born no more, and that men can never again be roused to action by the arts of eloquence ; but, as has been already stated, I believe that to-day it is only the occasion and theme that are momentarily lacking. Human nature does not change from generation to generation ; but its impulses and its elemental motives still remain the same. As it has always been true in the past, so will it always, I believe, be true throughout the future, that when great bodies of men are stirred by intense emotion and when the wind of pas-

sion is blowing over human hearts, then will the fire once more descend and touch the lips of some born orator, who will, as heretofore, smite down all opposition, take reason and imagination captive, and impose his single will on all who hear him, by the indescribable magic of the spoken word.



**THE DOWNWARD DRIFT IN AMERICAN  
EDUCATION**



## THE DOWNWARD DRIFT IN AMERICAN EDUCATION\*

FOR thirty years the development of American education has been almost wholly influenced by German teaching and example. Ever since the termination of the Civil War our students, in numbers that increase each year, have sought to supplement the training given them at home by spending one or more semesters at the German universities; the pædagogical ideas of German educators have been made accessible to everyone through paraphrases and translations; the German methods have been universally accepted as the very best and soundest known; until at last we find the whole profession of American teachers leavened through and through by German thought.

This powerful and undisputed influence has been in many ways productive of a vast amount

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of good. In the first place, it has helped our people to cut loose in all their intellectual life and scholarly work from that ancient bondage to English tradition which was received and perpetuated throughout the long-protracted period of American colonialism. For English scholarship, as it existed a century or more ago, when Gray and Gibbon styled the English universities "the home of bats and owls," was in many ways a thing of elegant sterility; and as handed down from generation to generation in our country, it wholly lost its elegance and intensified its sterility. In the second place, the German influence taught the practical and scientific value of thoroughness—of all lessons the very hardest for Americans to learn. The slipshod, happy-go-lucky optimism of our people, eager for quick results and careless about perfection of form and accuracy of detail, was nowhere, indeed, so unhappily visible as in our scholarship. Isolated as Americans long remained from all immediate contact with an older and more finished civilization, they found it difficult to admit that anything was better than their best; and hence mere show and superficial cleverness passed current with the indiscriminating many, depriving them of any serious standards of com-



parison and cursing them with the fatuous self-complacency that is so fatal to all high achievement.

It was a revelation, then, to those stray pioneers of higher education who early in the sixties made their way to Heidelberg and Göttingen and Berlin to find at these great centres of learning what was to them a new and unknown intellectual life; to meet illustrious teachers who did not go over and over again with a monotonous *Nachbeterei* the rudimentary precepts of a text-book, but took for granted at the start the widest range of reading in their hearers; to watch investigators who set themselves the task of bringing to light what was unknown before, in laying bare the hidden, and augmenting by their work the sum of human knowledge; and to see gathered about these men a body of learners aflame with the noble enthusiasm of those whose ideal lies in the maximum and not in the minimum of achievement, and who fling themselves with all the passion of an intellectual crusade into the work of creative effort and discovery.

As a result of this new light upon methods of teaching and of learning, the old traditions of American education were swept away forever. The colleges and universities were nat-

urally the first to experience the change, and then, as their students went out into the schools and into the community at large, the whole mass was leavened until, as I have said above, our intellectual world was Germanized. A very important adjunct of this change, and one that made its swift accomplishment more easy, was the enormous increase of the German element in our population. In many of our larger cities the proportion of citizens of German birth is to-day actually in excess of the native-born, and there are several States even where the same preponderance prevails. It is therefore natural, as it is actually true, that the German influence already noticed should not only have been able to affect most radically the American methods and theory of education, but that it should have extended to a wider sphere and set its mark upon our social and political philosophy. That in a single generation a hitherto unknown interest in German pædagogical doctrine should spring up; that the German language should dispute with French its old-time place in the favor of cultivated men and women; and that German literature should now be taught and read almost as widely as the more attractive literature of France—these are but the superficial signs

of a very vital change. It is not too much to say that the influence of German thought, though directed first of all to a single phase of our development, has struck its roots down far more deeply; and that, aided by an ethnic change in our population, it has in reality effected a profound and somewhat startling alteration in the national character.

The American of a century ago was much more purely Anglo-Saxon than he is to-day. He still felt the dislike of all control, the impatience of restraint, and the strong individualism that had driven his ancestors from the England of Charles II., and that afterwards united them to defy the England of George III. Exulting in a sense of unrestricted freedom and an almost lawless largeness of vision, he felt himself equal to anything whatever. He had hewn out a home for himself with his own right arm, subduing the savage, the wild beast, and the illimitable forest; and he looked about him with something of the superb self-consciousness of a god, as he saw that his handiwork was very good. He was not a creature of rules and regulations; the most elemental principles of right and justice alone made up his simple code. He felt that character and energy together could accomplish

anything, and he laughed to scorn the thought of dependence upon any one. And even later, in the early years of the present century, one notes the evidences of an extreme particularism. In political life we see prolonged the era of the small self-governing community, the era of the town-meeting, with a semi-patriarchal importance given to the family ; and in a wider field the sentiment of nationality still slumbering, a tenacious adherence to the doctrine of States' Rights, a distrust of centralization, and, in general, a firm belief in Jefferson's dictum, that "the best government of all is the one that governs least." So sturdily independent, so resentful even of favors, were Americans then that an English traveller records her astonishment on visiting the House of Representatives to see "member after member leaping to his feet to denounce with passionate indignation a bill which proposed to grant from the national treasury a sum of money for the development and extension of a system of public roads." The American feeling of that day was, in fact, most admirably typified in Daniel Boone, who needed nothing but his axe and rifle for his maintenance, and who felt that he was being stifled if he found another white man settling down within a hundred miles of

him. It was an apotheosis of individuality, of self-reliance, and of personal power.

The German influence and the general alteration in the racial character of our people through incessant immigration have effectually changed all that; and to understand the change, one must consider for a moment what the mental attitude of the German really is. The typical German of the educated class is one who separates entirely his intellectual from his material life. He ascribes so much importance to the former, he has so much enthusiasm for its cult, that he views it as being in itself sufficient for the fulfilment of all his aspirations. Political conditions have for centuries intensified this tendency by excluding him from any really independent share in the larger public life, and thus forcing him back into his study or his lecture-room to think and theorize the more, because it is forbidden him to act. His life is, therefore, one of thought and not of action, and never is his thought conditioned by the various necessities that confront the man who tries to translate theory into terms of practice. Hence, it is always enough for the German if his notions be quite scientifically correct, if they be logical and lucid, if they be capable, in fact, of a sort of

mathematical demonstration. He makes no allowance in his scheme for any difficulties that would attend its application by reason of the passions or the prejudices or the temperamental differences of actual men and women; for the personal equation has no place in his large and luminous philosophy, nor are the very unphilosophical facts of life permitted to disturb the symmetry of his hypothesis. That good old story of the German who was asked to write a paper about lions, and who had never seen or heard of lions, but who at once shut himself up in a darkened room until such time as he should have evolved the true conception of a lion from his inner consciousness, gives us in a humorous way a very faithful illustration of the German's mental attitude towards life. To him all problems whatsoever, whether social or political or philosophical, may be solved by taking thought; and the true solution is always capable of being summed up in a formula. If anything is wrong in life it is because the necessary formula for its amendment has not yet been properly worked out. If there are misery and sin and poverty and crime perceptible on every hand, all that is needed to banish them is a knowledge of the formula. If the State is nearly

shipwrecked by misgovernment or by the hostility of foreign powers, a simple formula will set it right. Even character and morals and temperament are reducible to formulaic treatment; and a true German, like Max Nordau, will discover an incipient criminal in the greatest genius by simply getting at the measurements of the base of his head, by examining the tips of his ears, and by collecting the statistics of his similes and metaphors.

It is precisely here that American thought to-day displays most strikingly the German influence. ~~The cult of the formula~~ has taken root among us, and the extravagance of our national devotion to it is proportionate to the energy, and also to the childishness, of the American people. (The old-time American knew nothing about formulas. He had no preconceived and axiomatic theories about the precise way in which things should be done. He waited until the necessity came for doing a particular thing, and then he just did it and made no fuss about it. Take the drafting of our national Constitution, for example. Of the men who framed it, scarcely one was a political philosopher according to the German understanding of the term. They brought to their task no carefully elaborated outfit of sci-

entific abstractions. They had simply studied the political conditions that existed ; they understood the history and the temper of the people ; they grasped at once the practical difficulties and the practical possibilities of the problem, and they did their work accordingly. Any able German thinker could, probably, in half an hour point out a hundred absolutely fatal defects in the Constitution which these statesmen framed ; yet it has none the less endured, with scarce a change, down to the present day, and the experience of every decade only deepens the admiration with which men view this splendid national charter, which has served as a model for every republic founded since that time. On the other hand, the Germans had a chance in 1848 to show what government by formula is like. The political philosophers swarmed in the Frankfort Assembly of that year. No one could doubt the profundity of their learning ; they produced some of the most beautiful formulas that even Germany had been called on to admire ; yet in just about six months the whole thing went to smash, and ever since that day the German people have cowered meekly down beneath the booted heel of a military despotism such as a typical Anglo-Saxon people would reduce to



pulp in the space of twenty-four good working hours.

But the modified American of to-day is as formula-ridden as any German ever was. He has worked out two general formulaic remedies for everything. In the sphere of politics and economics he has set up for himself the legislative formula as an infallible panacea; while questions of every other sort he solves by the application of the educational formula. The legislative formula is supposed to be a substitute for the qualities that made the old-time American precisely what he was—for thrift and energy and self-reliance. The formula itself is an invocation of that mysterious and hazily defined Omnipotence which men impersonally call "the State," and which, in some inexplicable way, is supposed to have all power in heaven and earth to make men prosperous and happy, if only the appropriate formula can be devised in the shape of legislation. Thus we find in certain sections of the country the law invoked to make men temperate and sober; in others, to make them chaste; in still another, the Ten Commandments are to be enacted into statute law to make religion universal. If men, by reason of their own unthrift and reckless management, have lost their credit

at the banks, a law must instantly create new institutions for the special purpose of discounting all their paper. If, because of various economic conditions, the market prices of their products fall, a vote of Congress must at once reverse the universal laws of trade and screw up prices to a given figure. If money be scarce, the legislative formula will make it plenty, and assure to every man a comfortable balance at the bank. The American farmer of a century ago, if floods destroyed his crops or pestilence destroyed his cattle, just saved and worked and practiced self-denial till he had made good his losses. The American farmer of to-day does nothing of the kind. He simply lets his hair grow long and starts a new political party. In fact, though we call it in this country by another name, the spirit of American political theory to-day in every party is the helpless spirit of State Socialism—a purely German product, and one that has been spawned and nourished by the legislative formula.

The educational formula is equally in evidence among us. Just as the legislative formula is to make men prosperous and happy, so the educational formula is to make them wise and virtuous. Education can do anything, we are told, and every one is capable of

being educated, just as any one is capable of being made an educator. It is a revival of the old Socratic maxim that no one will voluntarily go wrong if he only knows the better way. And in this the formulaic method is followed all along the line. There is first the educational formula itself, the alkahest, the universal solvent of our intellectual alchemists. Then there is the formula for making the first formula known, and the formula for inculcating the other formula; so that to-day we have teachers who teach teachers to teach other teachers how to teach. Everything is worked out to the last degree of scientific exactness. The individual idiosyncrasy of the learner does not count. There is a psychological formula which reduces all intellects and all capacities to a common denominator, and everything can now be done by a set of scientific rules, from the time required per diem for teaching each division and subdivision of a topic to the precise manner in which that topic must be taught, almost down to the cut of the teacher's clothes. Formerly it was believed that there must be a certain adaptability in the instructor, a certain regard for the needs of the individual learner; but that has been done away with now. In these days the scientific educator in the pri-

many schools draws spidery little diagrams, in which a crooked line goes wriggling up a sort of trellis; and this psychological horoscope, all carefully marked out in accordance with a set of definite rules, saves every one a world of trouble in deciding on his methods. Education nowadays, in fact, is being desiccated and formulated and reduced to the compact and convenient shape of a set of logarithmic tables. All this, of course, is here quite strongly put. In detail and in particular instances it is subject to qualifications and exceptions; but as a characterization of existing tendencies it is absolutely true.

A natural corollary of such a state of doctrine is the popular assumption that anything whatever can be taught. Hence comes a proposition which is logically sound enough and theoretically unobjectionable: that in the rapidly expanding curricula of our colleges and universities those subjects of instruction should appear which bear directly on the personal welfare of the student in his future life, and that his moral and social, as well as his intellectual, needs should be provided for. If we teach him languages and literatures and philosophy and history to make him an accomplished gentleman, and if we teach him chemistry and me-

chanical engineering to enable him to earn an income, why not also teach him those things that are vastly more important for his real happiness? Why should not the young and inexperienced undergraduate in the formative period of his early life learn from the lips of university instructors everything that makes for a rational, virtuous, and successful life—how to preserve his health, how to resist temptation, how to choose his profession, how to avoid mistakes in business, how to invest his money, how to select a wife, how to bring up children, and how to grow old gracefully? These things are really most important—they are even vital; and why should not the universities make the teaching of them a matter of most serious concern? Why not, indeed? The thought is very beautiful and pleasing. In fact, if all the blessings of the legislative formula shall finally be added to the equally beneficent effects of the educational formula, what a glorious world this world of ours will be! When legislation finally assures to every citizen a princely income, and makes him chaste and temperate and earnestly religious, and when education gives him perfect wisdom, unbroken health, a thoroughly congenial occupation, exemption from all business troubles,

a fascinating wife, and children that shall fill his heart with pride, then truly we shall all be living, not merely in Utopia, but in Paradise.

The great defect in all this sort of argument, so far as it relates to education, is precisely that which vitiates so many of the German theories. It takes no notice whatsoever of the facts of man's experience, and it is based upon the fallacy that all possible subjects of teaching stand upon precisely the same basis. It does not carefully distinguish, as one is ultimately forced to do, between the facts of which a purely intellectual knowledge is sufficient to afford a reasonable grasp and those other facts to which this knowledge can of itself give no real practical importance. For instance, by drilling any man of average intelligence in the necessary rules and principles, it is entirely possible to make of him a tolerable mathematician, because when once he knows those rules and principles he has done what is essential. In like manner you can, by your mere teaching, make a sort of linguist of him, or a grammarian, or a bibliographer; but you cannot, on the other hand, by any possible amount of formal precept or instruction or exhortation, endue him with sobriety or continence or prudence or practical wisdom. And why? Sim-

ply because in all these things mere knowledge is not half enough ; but it may be, as it usually is, a thing entirely apart from practice. The knowledge that merely knows is a very different thing from the conviction that dominates and deters. One may to some extent be drawn from teaching, but the other can come from grim experience alone. Is it, indeed, through lack of knowledge that most men violate the laws of life? Are those who drink themselves to death not perfectly aware of what they are about? Are the gluttons and the dissolute supremely ignorant of what will ultimately happen to them? Does not one hear men every day declare that such and such a thing is killing them, but that they cannot bring themselves to give it up? And are not these things oftenest found among the very class that is made up of educated men and women?

"Video meliora proboque,  
Deteriora sequor"

is a confession that is at once both older and more modern than the time of Ovid, who first wrote it down. It might, indeed, quite truthfully be made by every one who has fully and freely lived the life of the larger world. All human history is rich in illustrations of how

wide the gulf is which divides mere knowledge from the will and purpose to apply it: Seneca heaping up a colossal fortune and sitting down before a table wrought of beaten gold to write a philosophic tract on the curse of avarice and the blessings of simplicity and poverty; Thomson, who never left his pillow before noon, lying in bed and composing enthusiastic lines on the delights of early rising; and quite recently, that blend of saint and satyr, Paul Verlaine, reeling home from a long debauch in the foulest stews of Paris to set down with trembling hand an outburst filled with passionate adoration of the God of Purity. If only teaching could make human beings wise and good, the world would long ago have welcomed the millennium, for surely there has been no lack of teaching since the time when men first came to see the link that binds effect to cause. Through all the centuries the moralist has moralized, the philosopher has explained, the father has exhorted and advised, the mother has pleaded; and the young have listened to it all, and then gone on their own way unconvinced. And through the centuries, also, the priests have taught, calling to their aid the arts of eloquence and the promises and threatenings of religion, appealing to every motive



that can sway the mind—now promising in words as sweet as honey the splendors of immortal life and endless happiness, and now blasting the imagination with fearful pictures lighted by the glaring fires of hell. Does any one suppose that what duty and affection and pity and hope and terror, backed up by strenuous eloquence and religious faith, have never yet accomplished, can be effected by the kindly talk of a sleek university professor in some intercalated college course? What possible impression could be made in this way by even the very wisest and shrewdest and most eminent of teachers? A group of young men with the hot blood of youth running riot in their veins, their hearts on fire with passion and stung by an œstrus-like desire to fathom for themselves the secrets of the unknown life that lies in all its strange, mysterious fascination just beyond the college walls—how much will the teaching of another man's experience stand for in the minds of such as these? Some mewling milksop here and there may possibly accept that teaching and remember it; but mewling milksops do not count in the general scheme of life. And as to some of these proposed additions to the university curriculum, the humor of the proposition strikes one rather

forcibly. When a young man is about to fall in love, can any one imagine him referring gravely to his note-books to see whether the conditions are exactly suitable, and whether the professorial formula applies? And one would like to ask whether it is contemplated to give a practical and convincing turn to the instruction, as is necessary even in far less important subjects. Is the university to offer several electives in experimental courtship, and is there to be established a laboratory of love?

No ; it is just as true to-day as it was true five thousand years ago, and as it will be true five thousand years from now, that the most vital and important facts of life cannot be taught by academic training, but must be learned by every human being for himself. It is a hard saying ; but it expresses nothing but the fact of human limitation—the limitation that serves as a line beyond which mankind can never go ; for if the experience of the past could be accumulated, and if the youth of to-day could be at once equipped with all the garnered wisdom of his ancestors, and if every generation could add to this its own experience intact, the race of men would cease to be mere mortals, but would rise above the

level of humanity and be as the immortal gods.

The fact is, that so far from adding to the subjects now included in the university curriculum, we should, instead, diminish them. The present craze for making that curriculum a common dumping-ground for every possible variety of instruction is the most unfortunate of all the tendencies that are visible in educational theory to-day. As we have imitated the Germans in so many things, it is a lasting pity that we have not seen fit to imitate them also in excluding the teaching of the purely mechanical arts from university instruction and in shutting them off into the polytechnicum, where they properly belong. When machine-shops and factories and all the paraphernalia of the applied sciences are imported into the academic shades, and when the perfume of the Attic violet is stifled by the stench of the chemist's crucible, the true purpose of the university is forgotten, and its higher mission is in a great measure sacrificed; for then there can exist no longer a distinct and definite type of university-man. The civic value of the university in times now past was this: it gave to the community a very special class, not only highly trained, and

trained in a broad and liberal way, but trained also according to one particular standard and with an absolute identity of training. This identity of training bound all university-men together by the strongest possible ties of sympathy and mutual understanding, so that they stood forth as a sort of Sacred Band, alike in private and in public life, exercising an influence for serenity and sanity of thought whose value was inestimable and out of all proportion to the actual numbers of the ones who exercised it. From this class came the men who laid so firmly the foundations of the American Republic, and who worked out in a broad, far-seeing way the basal principles of our constitutional law and public polity; for of this class were Hamilton and Jefferson and Jay and Madison and Webster and Calhoun and Adams. They all received the older college training, based not upon the bread-and-butter principle, but upon the nobler and far loftier conception of what the highest education means. But at the present time the curious belief that all subjects of study are in themselves equally important is dragging into the sphere of university teaching anything and everything which the casual person may desire to know; and worse than this, it is putting upon every

grade of capacity and attainment the self-same stamp of approval. Yet those who argue for this equality of value in the subjects taught do not regard the products of such teaching as being equal. They do not rank a great fly-paper manufacturer with a great statesman, nor a great cheese-monger with a great lawyer or physician. But when we hear to-day that So-and-so is a university-man, one never knows by reason of that fact alone whether this person is in reality a gentleman and a scholar, or whether he is only a sublimated type of tinker. And now that this confusion has been thoroughly established, what intimate and universal bond of sympathy can possibly exist among the scions of a university? The university has, in fact, been swamped by the influx of the mob, and its inmates are themselves becoming only an unconsidered fraction of that mob. In other words, the so-called "liberal" policy in university government has not raised mediocrity to the plane of scholarship, but has degraded scholarship to the plane of mediocrity. It has been in every sense a process of levelling down; in no sense has it been a process of levelling up. This, then, is gradually blotting out the true value of the university as a factor in the nation's larger life.

By throwing its doors wide open to every one and for every purpose, and by losing all perception of its original design, its chief importance and its noblest influence are vanishing away—lost in the wellnigh universal reign of the commonplace.

Linked closely with many other very serious educational mistakes, and from many points of view by far the most profoundly serious of them all, is that curious fancy, which is almost universal among our people, that education in itself and for all human beings is a good and thoroughly desirable possession. So axiomatic is this held to be that its principle has been incorporated into the constitutions of many of our States, and not only is education made free to all, but in most States it is made compulsory upon all. There is probably in our whole system to-day no principle so fundamentally untrue as this, and there is certainly none that is fraught with so much social and political peril for the future. For education means ambition, and ambition means discontent. Now, discontent is in itself a divine thing. When it springs up in a strong creative intellect capable of translating it into actual achievement, it is the mother of all progress; but when it germinates in a limited and feeble

brain it is the mother of unhappiness alone. Yet the State decrees that all shall have some share of education—that is, some share of discontent; and as the vast majority of minds are limited and feeble, compulsory education means everywhere compulsory discontent. Could anything be more fatuous or more dangerous from a statesman's point of view? The thoroughly pernicious fruits of such a policy are already visible. We see on every hand great masses of men stirred by a vague dissatisfaction with their lot, their brains addled and confused by doctrine that is only half the truth and vaguely understood, yet thoroughly adapted to make them ripe for the work of the agitator and the enemy of public order. We see the farms deserted by young men who flock to the already crowded cities in the hope of ease and fortune, and by young women whose attainments fit them to be admirable dairy-maids, but who aspire to be artists and musicians. Such education as these possess can never qualify for any serious *rôle*; it only makes for grievous disappointment and a final heart-break. Nor is there any moral safeguard in a limited degree of education. Quite the contrary. It only makes the naturally criminal person far

more dangerous, converting the potential sneak-thief into the actual forger and embezzler and the bar-room brawler into the anarchistic bomb-thrower. Statistics lately sent to Congress in a veto message show the fact that in our prisons the proportion of the fairly educated to the uneducated is far larger than among an equal number of ordinary citizens. And this is due to the ill-considered system which forces a half-education on all men, whether they will or no, thus breeding for the State some of its most difficult sociological problems. A sounder policy would make the way to education easy, but not free to all. In minds that nature has adapted for development discontent will spontaneously arise, and these minds will of their own accord strive upward. Let these find education easy of attainment, since they are fitted for it; but more than this no philosophical legislator to-day should advocate or desire.

The summing up of the whole matter, then, is this: the outlook of our educational future is very far from bright. A mistaken notion of the use and value of education now prevails, which, in a sphere of elementary teaching, is preparing danger for society and for the State by looking far too strictly at mere theory and



by ignoring fact; while in the sphere of university training the only safeguard against these growing evils is being gradually swept away. To seek to stem the tide of tendency is to-day an idle task, and one can only wait and hope for a reaction and a very radical reversion to the sounder practice of the past. With the modern scientific modes of teaching, and with an apparatus far beyond what other centuries ever knew, the philosophic thinker can imagine a university ideal which may some day perhaps be brought to pass. But the key to it all is the true conception of what higher education really means. The university does not exist to train mere sordid toilers and to help them to make money. We do not need more baccalaureate bagmen, more "hustlers," more matriculated mechanics, more polymathic plumbers. We have too many of them now. Its purpose should be something higher—to teach serenity of mind and loftiness of purpose, to make men see straight and think clearly, to endue them with a sense of proportion and a luminous philosophy of life—a thing impossible to those who do not draw their inspiration from the thought, the history, and the beauty of the classic past. It should produce for the service of the State men such as those who in

the past made empires and created commonwealths—a small and highly-trained patriciate, a caste, an aristocracy, if you will. For every really great thing that has been accomplished in the history of man has been accomplished by an aristocracy. It may have called itself a sacerdotal aristocracy, or a military aristocracy, or an aristocracy based on birth and blood; yet these distinctions were but superficial, for in reality it always meant one thing alone—the community of interest and effort in those whose intellectual force and innate gift of government enabled them to dominate and control the destinies of States, driving in harness the hewers of wood and drawers of water, who constitute the vast majority of the human race, and whose happiness is greater and whose welfare is more thoroughly conserved when governed than when trying to govern. From the small, compact, and efficient body of free citizens who, amid the unfree and disfranchised, made up the aristocracies of Athens and of Sparta, and the patrician class in Rome down to the gentlemen of England, this has been always true, and not because of the ostensible reason of their domination, but because they gathered to themselves and made their own all that was best and strongest in the nation, opening the

way for genius wherever it was found and working out those great results that stand as monuments of human power. A caste, an aristocracy of intellect like this, might still be bred in our American universities would they but thrust out of their precincts the faddists and the utilitarians, exclude the factories and workshops and all the polytechnic patchwork that make of the university curriculum to-day a thing of rags and tatters, and retain only the humanities and the liberal arts. Then they might once more give to the service of the nation men of high breeding and supreme attainments, who would rise above the level of the commonplace to establish justice and maintain truth, to do great things in a large and splendid way, and to illustrate and to vindicate the majesty of man.

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QUOD MINIME RERIS



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THERE is something partly pathetic and partly exasperating in the reflection that the vast majority of mankind, on nearly every important subject, get their facts and their opinions wholly at second hand. Close to the heart of each great problem, whether it be theological or political or scientific or philosophical, a few powerful and unwearied minds are always laboring and watching, forgetful of self, single-minded, devoted to one sublime ideal—the discovery of truth, cost what it may and point whither it will. They have no thought of gain, no love of popular applause, no motive save the scholar's motive, which is, at its highest, so pure and so disinterested as almost to deserve the name of sacred. Whatever knowledge men have gleaned as yet in each respective field is known to them, and they live in serene contentment, and die with a smile of happiness, if they can but feel that by their labor and self-denial the sum of hu-

man knowledge has been perceptibly augmented, that through their effort a single ray of light has stolen out a little further into the dusk of the Unknown. They seek absolutely nothing for themselves, and what they learn is free to all who care to take it from them.

There stands about these men a second class—shrewd, clever, quick-witted, and ingenious, having much of the scholar's knowledge and very little of the scholar's spirit, with eyes that are turned towards the world at large, which is, in fact, their oyster. Whatever stream of knowledge flows forth from the little sanctuary where the giants of learning smite the rocks of difficulty, these brilliant persons rapidly scoop it up into their own shallow vessels, and diluting it with the water of the first roadside puddle, run abroad throughout the world, selling the draught to any one who may seek to buy. To drop the figure, it is, in general, only the adapter, the popularizer, the actual dispenser, whom the world at large encounters ; and it is, therefore, to him that the glory and the praise of the discovery are given. Take almost any field of science, using that term in its broadest sense, and ask the average man to tell you the great contemporary names suggested by it, and he will always give you



the names of middlemen, of men who sit in the outer gates of learning and not within the penetralia. Hence it is (to take two obvious illustrations) that the multitude regard Mr. Edison as a great master of electrical experiment, and view Professor Max Müller as chief among comparative philologists.

It is in the sphere of religious and theological discussion that this curious and rather depressing phenomenon is most strikingly perceptible, because such topics have from time immemorial most vitally and continuously interested the greatest number of human beings. And here the story is the same. A few profoundly learned men, equipped with all the means of investigation known to this last and greatest of the centuries, are laboring in the difficult field of Biblical research, animated by no controversial ardor, heedless of fame, and seeking only in a reverent spirit to eliminate error and to know the entire truth as God has given men to see it. Theirs is the knowledge of text and times, of the subtlest linguistic coloring, of the nicest questions of evidence, of the testimony that comes from within, and of the corroboration or contradiction that exists in the perplexing records of external history. They work on, and under their hands the light

appears to grow less dim. Of the problems before them, some seem to contain the possibility of a plain solution ; there is something at least that can be clearly learned. But they know that the last word has not yet been spoken, and that they have lifted only a little corner of the veil. The time has not arrived for any man to speak with full authority ; and they still work on. But all about them are flitting other and restless minds eager for something new, impatient of delay, filled with the spirit of the intellectual charlatan and the sensation-monger ; and these men snatch greedily at the scraps that fall from the sober table of the wise, and rush off to proclaim a new doctrine and to dedicate some structure hastily reared upon a foundation that will not for one moment bear a serious strain. They write books and magazine articles, and even letters in the newspapers ; and they bask complacently in the sunshine of popular amazement.

Upon these there waits still another class—the shallow, superficial, fluent preachers who combine the *flair* of a trained reporter with the ambitions of a popular actor. They are filled with the modern notion that the teaching of religion—the most solemn and impressively awful responsibility that can rest

upon a human being—is of value only in so far as it can be made amusing or exciting or picturesque. These are the men who put off the external marks of their calling, who dress like commercial travellers, who slap you on the back, assume an air of brisk joviality, preach bicycle sermons, organize sports and pastimes for their flock, and conceive the idea of “church smokers” as a means of grace. This sort of thing they speak of in their own jargon as “meeting men as men,” “bringing religion down from the clouds,” and “making it practical”; not seeing that their unseemly and grotesque impersonation is viewed by men of the world with something of that half-amused, half-pitying contempt with which one would behold a middle-aged school-mistress capering in a skirt-dance. The eternal themes of reverence and mercy, of justice and of judgment, are wholly absent from their clack, and they can tell you far more about duck-shooting and the gossip of the clubs.

When, then, the middlemen of doctrine, the theological jerry-builders, send out some new report of what they say has been discovered by serious and scientific scholars, this half-explained and half-digested bit of knowledge is snapped up in a flash. It is, very likely,

only part of a preliminary study, a tentative hypothesis, a theory broached as being one of several possible explanations; or it may represent only one stage of an investigation which is still in progress and of which the final results may wholly alter the actual significance of the earlier assumption. But all this makes no difference to the clerical seeker after a sensation. He hastily reads an article or two in the magazines, runs over a popular book upon the subject, gets a general notion of what it is all about, hits upon a few catchwords and effective phrases, and then feels himself fully prepared to discuss the whole history of Biblical criticism from Thomas of Heraclea to Tischendorf and Gregory. This leads men, especially newspaper-men, to describe him as "fully abreast of the times," or perhaps even as "an up-to-date divine." If the particular information that has filtered its way down to him is, on the face of it, a little subversive of previously accepted notions, something with a flavor of heterodoxy about it, he is especially well pleased. Nothing delights a clergyman of this type more than to utter radical sentiments and views that to many are perhaps a little shocking—especially when put, as he too often puts them, with a half-humorous treat-

ment of a sacred theme, or a jocular version of some Biblical narrative. He knows that there is something peculiarly piquant in heterodoxy when it is preached from an orthodox pulpit, though the same utterances would fall absolutely flat and unnoticed if proclaimed by one without the pale. Therefore he smugly keeps a tight hold upon the temporalities of his charge while playing all the time with heresy; and if he can only get some one to accuse him of being an actual heretic, his future is assured; for then the newspapers will print abstracts of his sermons, and he will be known both far and wide as a "liberal" and "modern" man.

Not all who set forth in their sermons what they think to be the truth established by the higher criticism are men of this cheap type. There are scores of conscientious teachers, who themselves are troubled by the assaults upon tradition, and who vaguely feel the spiritual danger that lurks in much that is put forth by those who claim to know the latest doctrine of the critics. Yet these men, from the very fact of their conscientiousness, hold that it would be quite dishonest to conceal the facts as they have come to understand them. So they load up their discourses with questions of textual and exegetical subtlety; speaking of the doubt-

ful authorship of one or another of the sacred writings, of the chronological uncertainty of a record long regarded as inspired, of pseudonymous epistles, of the early canon, of interpolations, and incorporated glosses. They do not see that the fundamental truths of Christian doctrine, its ethics and its true divinity, are not in the least affected by things like these. They forget that the obligation and the moral beauty of charity and chastity are not dependent upon one view or another of a chronological date; that the Aramaic coloring of a prophet's style cannot impair the eternal validity of justice; that the double authorship of a Biblical record does not lessen the inherent sanctity of an honest, reverent, and blameless life; that the peculiar significance of a particle askew has no bearing upon the need which all men feel of hope and consolation in their hours of sorrow. And, again, they do not see how, nevertheless, these paltry scraps of third-hand scepticism, when imparted to the multitude, do actually undermine and honeycomb the foundation of a faith upon which must ultimately rest those motives that alone lead men to strive for a better and a purer and a nobler life. What does the layman gather from a homily replete with all the jargon of a transcendental critic? Noth-

ing whatever beyond a vague impression that all the teaching learned by him at his mother's knee—the teaching that has kept alive within him all the better aspirations of his nature—is doubtful, obsolete, or even false. And then as time goes on he comes to think that right and wrong are nothing but conventionalities when all is so uncertain, that life's philosophy is only hedonism, that there is no changeless standard of morality, and that an enlightened selfishness is in reality the highest wisdom. It *may* be otherwise, he will tell you, but he doesn't know; and when religious teachers are themselves in doubt, why should he acknowledge any personal responsibility? Thus the process of disintegration spreads, and thus the teachers of religion are themselves unconsciously converted into mere assistant infidels. And all the while, above and beyond these untrained babblers of a doctrine still chaotic and half-understood, the dispassionate, untiring students who are seated at the sources go on and on and on, discarding one by one their own first tentative hypotheses, proving the falsity of their own first radical assumptions, and quickly leaving far behind them their own crude generalizations, even while the superficial pulpit orator is still endeavoring to master

these and to promulgate them as being the ultimate and supreme expression of discovered truth.

A truly monumental work by Professor Adolf Harnack, of which the first part not long ago appeared, suggests inevitably the train of thought that has been here outlined. Professor Harnack is himself unquestionably viewed by Biblical scholars as being the most eminent of all the students who are to-day investigating the history and the sources of early Christian literature. As a chronologist he has no superior, and he is deeply read in all the existing records of the period that is his chosen field of scientific investigation. His elaborate *Dogmengeschichte*, only lately translated into English, has been, since its first appearance in 1889, a standard work with investigators of every school of thought. He is not an orthodox theologian; in fact, his name has in the past been many a time invoked for the discomfiture of the adherents of orthodox tradition. But he is a type of the scholar who is absolutely free from any trace of intellectual vanity, and his frankness and generosity and candor have won for him the respect and even the admiration of those who have most earnestly opposed his critical judgments. He is one of those rare



spirits who feel it to be no shame, but rather a most honorable duty, to retract beliefs which further light has shown to be erroneous, and who with a single heart desire to establish nothing but the truth.

The work referred to just above as having recently appeared contains a most minute and searching exposition of a part of his investigations in the chronology of the first two centuries of the Christian era, and to these he has prefixed an Introduction written in a singularly luminous and forceful style, and summarizing the general conclusions to which his long and patient toil has led him. This lucid statement of the attitude of perhaps the greatest living scholar towards some of the most vexatious problems of New Testament criticism must necessarily arouse a very general interest; and it may be very specially commended to the notice of those dabblers in theology whose minds still feel the influence of Baur and Strauss, and who regard a tincture of the Tübingen teaching as the mark of erudite and enlightened liberalism.

For the benefit of the general reader, it may be useful to recall briefly the attitude assumed by those investigators who, with perfect honesty but with imperfect data, laid the foun-

dations of the particular school which so grievously unsettled the minds of all who let themselves be dazzled by its learning and impressed by its audacity. Of these destructive critics, Ferdinand Christian Baur, "the Niebuhr of New Testament criticism," and one imbued with the Hegelian view of history, professed to see in the books of the New Testament evidence of a period of storm and stress in the early days, of a period when discordant passion rent the Church asunder and filled with bitterness and resentment the factions that contended over questions of ecclesiastic polity. Closely following Baur came Strauss, as ingenious, brilliant, and profound as he, and more aggressively radical than De Wette, his other predecessor, whose methods, in fact, as applied by him to the study of the Old Testament, Strauss now directed upon the New. Under his dissolving touch the Gospels seemed to melt into mist and myth; miracle, prophecy, faith itself, appeared to shrink to nothingness. His keen analysis seemed based upon irrefutable fact, and the charm of his style carried his teaching to minds that seldom note the varying phases of theological discussion. The influence of his *Leben Jesu* it would be difficult to overrate. Upon timor-

ous souls of the Robert Elsmere type the effect was overwhelming, while others who shrank from the bold logic of Strauss still received something of his scepticism through less polemical works, among which perhaps Renan's *Histoire des Origines* may be regarded as most influential. Probably not many English and American theologians went all the length that Strauss would logically lead them; but there is not a doubt that much which he professed to demonstrate found lodgment in the minds of many men, especially in those of teachers of religion. Many perhaps did not at once confess to being influenced by what they read; but it is certain that their former faith, their feeling of certainty, yielded gradually to the solvent of this German revelation, and that in time their attitude became and has remained the attitude of men who doubt. As Professor Harnack himself declares:

"There was a time—in fact, the general public has not gone beyond it yet—when the oldest Christian literature, including the New Testament itself, was looked upon as but a tissue of deceptions and falsifications. . . . There is still left . . . an undefined sense of distrust, a method like that of a suspicious government which is always fastening itself on single points, and which attempts by means of them to at-

tack conclusions that are clear and definite. . . . An effort is now made to trace all sorts of 'tendencies,' and to point out extensive interpolations; or else a scepticism is visible which places probability and improbability on precisely the same level."

Now it is to be presumed that both the *Tendenzkritik* and the scepticism of which Professor Harnack is here speaking are far less universal in this country than in Germany; yet they certainly exist, and they exist, too, in minds in which their presence is not generally suspected. But their existence undoubtedly depends upon a strong feeling that they are in accordance with the matured and well-established opinions of the very ablest scholars. Our doubting Thomases, in fact, have not yet got beyond the era of Baur and Strauss; and they imagine that the views of Baur and Strauss are still substantially the views that German critics hold to-day. They know, of course, that the work of investigation is still going on; but they are absolutely unaware that its trend is by no means the same as that which characterized the scholarship of the early sixties. Hence, it is extremely interesting, and to the majority even of Biblical students it must be almost startling, to come upon a frank, dispassionate statement of re-

sults like those set forth in Professor Harnack's Introduction. To feel their full significance and weight, it should again be noted that this writer is everywhere acclaimed as being the very ablest and most conscientious of those scholars who approach the subject from the side of purely secular and scientific criticism.

What, then, is the deliberate judgment of this eminent investigator with regard to the questions that have just been mentioned? Coming to his task with a thorough disbelief in the accuracy of the Christian traditions, and standing even to-day without the pale of orthodoxy, Professor Harnack states, nevertheless, that the conclusions which he has reached are in all important points in harmony with these same traditions. The irresistible logic of chronology, the marshalling of an infinite array of significant facts, have led him with most admirable candor to set down this very remarkable confession :

"The oldest literature of the Church in all important points and in most of its details is, from the point of view of literary criticism, both genuine and worthy of reliance. In the whole New Testament there is in all probability only a single writing [the Second Epistle of Peter] that can be looked upon as pseudonymous in the strict sense of the word."

He then goes on to say that, even of the uncanonical writings, those that are pseudonymous are surprisingly few; that in the case of one at least (the so-called *Acta Theclæ*) its pseudonymity was recognized and condemned by the Church itself; that there are few writings that are interpolated, and that the interpolations themselves are mainly harmless.

"The literary tradition of the Pre-Catholic Period is shown to be, as a whole, reliable."

But these general statements, striking though they be, do not exhaust the list of Professor Harnack's remarkable admissions. Practically he accepts all of the Pauline Epistles as genuine, though the dates which he defends differ by a few years from those of the Church tradition. He gives a chronology of St. Paul's life, which removes the last doubt, based on external evidence, against the authenticity of these writings. He points out the internal evidence which each of the Gospels affords as testimony to the genuineness of the others. He states without qualification that the letters of Ignatius and of Polycarp are all authentic, and he admits with a generous frankness the inaccuracy of the view upon this subject which he himself would have defended ten years ago. Most im-

pressive of all is his broad and immensely significant summing up, in which he boldly asserts that the whole drift of critical thought to-day is not destructive, but conservative (he calls it "reactionary"), and that he looks for a strengthening of this tendency in the immediate future.

"The chronological succession in which tradition has placed the original documents of Christianity is, in all essential points, from the Epistles of Paul to the writings of Irenæus, correct; and it forces the historian to disregard all theories whatever relating to these events, if they conflict with this succession."

It is eminently desirable that these conclusions of so learned and dispassionate a scholar may soon be very widely known. They surely will correct the false assumption that a sneaking scepticism in religious teaching is in any sense a proof of erudition or of liberality of thought; and they may possibly bring back to a more sober way of thinking those whose convictions have been unsettled by a mistaken adherence to mere critical authority. Then we may see, perhaps, far fewer "up-to-date divines" and more of those simple-mannered priests who do not study fashion in their faith and change it with each season of the year;

but who live quietly among their flocks, sharing their sorrows and their joys, and teaching them, not the latest thing in dittography and haplography, but instead those homely virtues that can never age, and that in every century bind men together and make for unity and purity and untroubled peace.

Yet vastly more important than the actual conclusions to which Professor Harnack has attained is the evidence which this volume gives us of how shifting and uncertain at the best is purely secular learning. What this great critic held as truth ten years ago he now repudiates as falsehood ; what his predecessors stated with dogmatic certainty, even the most radical of modern Biblical investigators have long ago rejected. It is an impressive lesson to every one who is tempted to yield up some portion of historic faith to the winds of secular authority, to be blown about with every fitful gust ; for, looking back over long periods of years, critics recant, their teaching perishes ; and that which stands immutable and quite secure is the great tradition and the mighty system that perpetuate whatever is best and highest in human aspiration and belief. Mere scholarship grows obsolete and is discredited ; but the pages over which the scholar pores



still lend to the troubled soul the consolation of inspired wisdom, while the splendid structure that has been reared upon their teaching is the one and only thing that, amid the wreck of theory, the mist of casuistry, and the supreme assault of intellectual pride, has never for a single moment yet been shaken.

THE END